ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

EVOLUTIONARY NARRATIVES IN THE POETRY AND PROSE OF CONSTANCE NADEN

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Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my Mum, who died of Alzheimer's on 23rd September 2014. To her cherished memory, the following quote seemed appropriate:

'Submitted in partial fulfilment of an eternal debt' (Henkin 1963).

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
ABSTRACT

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Since the late twentieth-century a renewed interest in Constance Naden, the late Victorian polymath, has focused on a narrow selection of her poetry. Consequently, researchers have neglected the bulk of her verse, prose and philosophical writing. This is an incomplete picture of Naden's contribution to the 1870s/1880s cultural context. My thesis, therefore, provides a systematic reading of Naden's entire published and unpublished poetic oeuvre, essays and miscellaneous writings from this post-Darwinian period.

This analysis reveals the development of evolutionary narratives, from uncertain beginnings, through to their becoming an intrinsic part of her writing. It also reveals Naden's progression from a religious but non-conformist upbringing, to agnosticism and possibly atheism. These narratives also uncover the influence of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer and the development of her philosophical system, Hylo-Idealism.

Naden was one of the best educated women of her generation and her extensive engagement with religion, science and philosophy suggested a bright future but for her death at thirty-one. Hylo-Idealism did not survive long after her passing, however, and the thesis posits reasons for its demise.

The thesis also investigates Naden's afterlife, uncovering a degree of myth-making following her early death. I argue that this was an attempt, by a small circle of intellectuals, to establish Naden within the narratives of her own time by continuing to publish her writing posthumously. They wanted to guarantee that Naden was accepted as an important philosopher of the 1870s/1880s and to ensure that she would still be relevant to evolutionary debates of the 1890s.

My study of both Naden's evolutionary narratives and her afterlife presents a holistic view of her as she appeared to her contemporaries. By analysing the trajectory of Naden's scientific, religious and philosophical development, and by elucidating the growth of evolutionary narratives in her work, my multi-disciplinary thesis is a new contribution to Naden studies.

Key words: Darwin, Spencer, evolutionary, narratives, Hylo-Idealism, afterlife.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

The length of some of the titles of the key texts has meant that it is necessary to use shortened versions of them throughout the thesis and these abbreviations are given below:

Abbreviation	Complete title
A Modern Apostle etc.	*A Modern Apostle; The Elixir of Life; The Story of Clarice; and Other Poems*
Complete Poetical Works	*The Complete Poetical Works of Constance Naden, with an Explanatory Fore-word by Robert Lewins*
Further Reliques	*Further Reliques of Constance Naden: Being Essays and Tracts for Our Times*
Induction and Deduction	*Induction and Deduction: A Historical and Critical Sketch of Successive Philosophical Conceptions Respecting the Relations between Inductive and Deductive Thought, and Other Essays*
Selections	*Selections from the Philosophical and Poetical Works of Constance C.W. Naden*
Songs and Sonnets	*Songs and Sonnets of Springtime*
What is Religion?	*What is Religion? A Vindication of Freethought with an Appendix on Hylo-Idealism; or, the Brain Theory of Mind and Matter, the Creed of Physics, Physic, and Philosophy*, annotated by Robert Lewins

List of Appendices

Enclosed Materials

Included with the hard-copy of this thesis is a memory-stick containing the following works by Naden:

- *Songs and Sonnets of Springtime (1881)*
- *A Modern Apostle; The Elixir of Life; The Story of Clarice; and Other Poems (1887)*
- *The Complete Poetical Works of Constance Naden, with an Explanatory Fore-word by Robert Lewins (1894)*

These three works are in PDF format.

They are digitised versions of Naden's works and so they are presented exactly as they were published.

The citations in my thesis correspond exactly to the page numbers in the PDF files.

Notes on the Text

In 2015 three unpublished notebooks were deposited at the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham by descendants of Constance Naden, Margaret Hall and Julian Rees:

Blue Notebook - *Poems by Constance C.W. Naden 1875*
Black Notebook - *Poems by Constance C.W. Naden 1875-6-7*
Brown Notebook - (Untitled) *November 28th 1878*

The Blue and Black notebooks together contain 103 unpublished poems of which 19 are translations from French and German writers (6 poems were published in *Songs and Sonnets*). Given that during her lifetime Naden published 98 poems and 20 translations from the works of writers such as Schiller and Goethe, the two poetry notebooks represent a major addition to Naden's oeuvre. My thesis does not analyse these poems unless they contain evolutionary narratives. In fact, most of the unpublished poems are juvenile works concerning love, folklore or chivalric tales. Nonetheless future work is required to transcribe all the poems in these notebooks with a view to producing a new *Complete Collected Works* to update the 1894 edition.

The Brown 'Philosophy' notebook, although untitled, contains extensive notes and jottings on Naden's philosophical views and is analysed in Chapter 3.

Copyright Declaration

Evolutionary Narratives
in the Poetry and Prose
of
Constance Naden

Stephen Ridley

Introduction

Constance Naden Redivivus[1]

In far off ages, when the earliest trace
Of sentient life on this poor earth began,
With awful shuddering through the worlds of space
A murmur ran,

But in that company of echoing spheres
None knew the meaning of its dread refrain
Nor any could interpret to his peers
The Birth of Pain. (Naden 1888a)

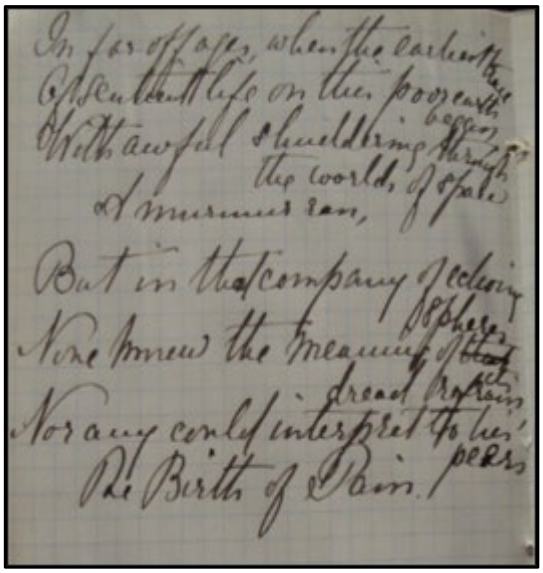

Fig. 1

This unpublished poem by Constance Naden represents an important contribution to what we can learn about this late nineteenth century polymath. I discovered it in 2012 (Fig. 1[2]) in a private archive that is owned by some of her descendants. Naden published two volumes of poetry and approximately fifty scientific and philosophical articles, during her lifetime, all between 1877 and 1889. This poem, though, is from a travel diary describing Naden's journey to the Far East from September 1887 to May 1888. It is highly likely that this was one of the last poems that Naden wrote because she died in 1889, aged just thirty-

[1] I am indebted to James Moore for the idea for the title of this section from his 1987 essay 'The Erotics of Evolution: Constance Naden and Hylo-Idealism'.
[2] © Sarah Rees-Porter 2017. Private collection, not to be reproduced.

one. Within these two brief stanzas can be read references to geology, evolution, nature and increasing secularisation without a controlling Godhead; I shall return to it in Chapter Two. These are some of the key elements of the evolutionary narratives that, I shall be arguing, are evident in almost all Naden's poetry and prose.

This thesis analyses those evolutionary narratives in the poetry and prose of Constance Naden. She wrote during a time in which Darwinism had become part of popular discourse and, given her own scientific training and evolutionary beliefs, this marks her out as a significant figure of the post-Darwinian generation. Consequently, Naden's work has been attracting increasing critical attention since the latter part of the twentieth century. So far, that attention has focused on a narrow selection of her poetry and almost no consideration has been given to her prose writing. The absence of a holistic picture is a gap in our understanding about Naden's development from religious non-conformism to agnosticism and possibly atheism. This lack of knowledge about Naden's journey may have contributed to an acceptance of the version of Naden that has been handed down to us by her circle of friends after her death, which may not necessarily be an accurate one. It is imperative for this thesis, therefore, to undertake a re-reading of Naden's entire oeuvre to develop a more nuanced understanding of her writing, thinking and development. This re-reading will deliver two results. Firstly, my analysis will posit the extent of her religious and secular development up to the time of her death. Secondly, I will provide an assessment of the extent of the myth-making by Naden's friends after her death and their subsequent attempts to establish her within the evolutionary narratives of the 1870s/1880s. This will make an important contribution to our knowledge of the 1870s/1880s by showing how a writer developed during this post-Darwinian period and integrated evolutionary narratives into her own life and work.

The 1870s/1880s, the time of Naden's short adult life, was an era that saw the scientific and religious communities searching for compromises to what James Moore, referring to Protestant responses to Darwin after 1870, has written about extensively in *The Post-Darwinian Controversies* (Moore 1979). Moore examines Christian theological responses to the post-Darwinian world of 1870-1900. His extensive research shows the affinities, alignments and mutual benefits of this response for religion and science during this period. Recognising the complex responses to Darwinism from the theological communities of interest, Moore illustrates that this was never a war but a complex and often positive relationship. By the time that Naden began publishing her poetry and prose, from 1877 onwards, it was clear that the scales had begun to tip in favour of religious doubt through the advances being made in science. This is not to suggest that religion did not still dominate the cultural context of the age reaching, as it did, into every aspect of people's lives. Nor is it to suggest that religious doubt dominated throughout the rest of the century. Science came under increasing pressure for its failures to produce definitive proof of its many assertions. Compromises were sought by both sides; the creation of the Metaphysical Society (1869-1880), for example, was a watershed moment and an exemplar of how religion and science could work together in a spirit of co-operation. This was one of the most obvious examples of how, according to Paul White: 'the boundaries between ostensibly opposed schools of thought could shift or dissolve in the course of critical engagement, exposing considerable common ground and contested territory claimed by all parties' (2014: 226). After 1880, groups such as the Aristotelian Society, that Naden herself was involved in, could form and thrive, as Lance St. John Butler describes it: 'in a climate of free speculation that arouses little opposition' (1990: 96). Although White and St. John Butler were not writing with Naden in mind, this nexus between religion, science and philosophy is indeed where her work is situated.

In reading Naden holistically and in context, it is possible to produce a much more nuanced account than a typical narrative of the post-Darwinian generation that they moved from belief to doubt and often to despair. Naden's journey from religion to agnosticism and possibly atheism emerges as not simply linear. Boundaries between religion and science were not immutable, a state of flux existed between them and, like evolution itself, constant change in a dynamic society was a fact of life. Naden is an exceptional example of this mutability given her background, sex, upbringing, training and development. Her belief in Darwinian evolutionism, however, is not unqualified and not without equivocation. She also sees the potential for evolution as a march of progress towards a perfected state, the belief that as Peter Morton puts it: 'despite all appearances to the contrary, inevitable progress is built into the fabric of the universe and by all clear minds can be recognised as such' (Morton 2014: 58). Morton's assertion would certainly have chimed with Naden but she also goes further in understanding how such progress can be achieved by marrying together religion, science and philosophy. In this fervour, she attempts to appropriate religion into her world view; not the religion of a supernatural creator but a philosophical system that sees God as existing within each of us.

The essence of this philosophical system, Hylo-Idealism, is to unite science, religion and philosophy. The credit for the creation of the system and its name was contested by both Naden and her mentor Robert Lewins and I explore this further in Chapter Four. The name is a conjunction of two terms, *Hylo* concerning matter and *Idealism* and argues that all phenomena comes from matter which has its own animating principles; this is derived for Lewins's earlier Hylo-Zoic view.[3] Both materialistic philosophies argue that matter is endowed with its own properties and energising principles. Naden believes that God only

[3] 'Hylozoism, (from Greek *hylē,* 'matter'; *zōē,* 'life') - in philosophy, any system that views all matter as alive, either in itself or by participation in the operation of a world soul or some similar principle' (2016). *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Retrieved 23 May, 2016, from http://www.britannica.com/topic/hylozoism

exists within us as thought cells and not as a separate spiritual being. The mind constructs its own subjective reality, which is all that can be known to us; thus, Hylo-Idealism is a monist philosophy that rejects the dualistic notion of a separation of spirit and body into mind and matter. It also rejects the religious notion of a separation of good and evil in the universe. Hylo-Idealism is individual, intimate and personal, therefore, and rejects an external consciousness or a supernatural. Such an internally focused philosophy leads to the secular proposition that God exists only within our individual minds and, as Naden explains, 'is simply the energy stored up in the thought cells; and this energy is no separable spiritual being, but a specialised form of that cosmic vitality which is inherent in matter' (Lewins 1890a: 171). Hylo-Idealism rejects religious dogma and the idea of a supernatural God; it did not gain any significant traction, is not to be found in any history of philosophy, was short-lived and survived only a few years beyond Naden's death within her own circle of associates. In its inclusion of all the knowable elements of the material world, however, Hylo-Idealism's philosophical goal of the amalgamation of science and religion drives Naden throughout her life and inhabits almost all her writing.

It is the journey from religion to agnosticism that is a key part of Naden's overall development, but it was not a simple nor direct journey. David Daiches argues that: 'Many of the Victorian sceptics were reluctant and troubled sceptics who spent much energy endeavouring to find a way out of their unbelief based on a redefinition of faith or of God or on some kind of reconciliation between scientific and religious truth' (1984: 112). Naden does not fit Daiches categorising of 'reluctant and troubled sceptics'. Instead she confidently seeks such a reconciliation between science and religion. In redefining faith, as Daiches describes it, she is concerned that the increasing confidence in science through discoveries in geology and palaeontology, for example, is undermined by moral concerns for society if religion begins to fade away. Naden is a secular materialist whose desire for

scientific and philosophical answers to society's problems leads her to seek to accommodate religion to some degree in her thinking. Naden's philosophy reveals a belief in the scientific pursuit of knowledge. This, she believed, could lead to the evolution of man and society towards a perfected state; this ethos underpins almost everything Naden says and writes. Bernard Lightman, recognising the challenges faced by people like Naden in conveying such a difficult message, has a view that: 'Although both middle- and lower-class agnostics opposed Christian claims to possess divinely revealed truth by insisting on the limits of human knowledge, they fashioned their philosophy to accommodate particular audiences' (2009 VII: 285). My analysis of Naden's evolutionary narratives will show her describing Christianity's rise and decline as a trajectory whose logical next step after decline seems to be agnosticism. It is important, however, to consider whether in this search for a compromise she is guilty of what George Levine calls 'philosophically evasive agnosticism' (1990: 226). In challenging Levine's description, I shall show how Naden seeks to reconcile science, religion and philosophy into one world-view.

Some brief biographical details are necessary to understand Naden's development within her cultural context of the 1870's and 1880's.[4] Naden was brought up by her grandparents in middle-class Edgbaston after the death of her mother, from postnatal complications, twelve days after the birth. She was baptised in St. Mary's Church, Birmingham and attended several Baptist churches during her adolescence. Naden's non-conformist upbringing continued from the age of eight up until the age of sixteen when she attended a Unitarian private day school. Unitarianism's inclusive mores manifested themselves through practical concerns such as the suffering of the poor, women's suffrage and a belief in the power of a good education. Furthermore, Unitarianism's broad

[4] I have written about Naden's life and work in 'Constance Naden' in *The Literary Encyclopedia*) [online] (2010). Also, see 'Constance Naden' by J. Jakub Pitha in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1999).

popularity and willingness to embrace science also attracted the affluent and the emerging middle classes, many of whom saw its potential to help alleviate society's problems. R.K. Webb writes:

> Firmly established at the liberal end of the spectrum of English Society and able significantly to influence the formation and implementation of advanced opinion, Victorian Unitarians – from wealthy, broad-minded patricians to liberated, self-consciously intellectual workingmen – were prepared to welcome almost any advances the scientists might make. (1990: 126)

Webb correctly identifies the liberality inherent in Unitarianism but it was the rejection of key tenets of the Christian faith, such as Heaven or Hell and the Resurrection, that immersed Naden from a young age in a non-conformist tradition that was both radical and increasingly secular. Naden's attendance at a Unitarian school, whilst still being apparently part of a Baptist tradition, is not the contradiction it may appear because, according to Knight and Mason, 'it was common for a Dissenter to remain within his or her 'old' nonconformist congregation while also attending a Unitarian meeting house' (2006: 54). Middle class dissenters of Birmingham, including the affluent people of Edgbaston, were also comfortable in moving around a dissenting tradition, as Knight and Mason describe, whether it was Baptist or Unitarian. This complex interplay of non-conformist perspectives during Naden's formative years undoubtedly added a fluidity to Naden's thinking that will be a common thread throughout this thesis.

Naden's journey from this Baptist upbringing, to the deist traditions of a Unitarian education and subsequent entry into the scientific world of education, foments her interest in what Gladstone refers to disparagingly as the 'negative school' (Alviella 1886: 4) of Agnostics, Atheists, Pagans Pantheists, Positivists, Sceptics and Secularists. Of Gladstone's 'negative school' the most influential person in her life was an atheist. He was a retired Army surgeon and self-taught philosopher named Robert Lewins, whom she met at the age of eighteen, and who was to become her lifelong friend and mentor. Three years

after meeting Lewins at Southport, Naden began her scientific education at the Birmingham and Midland Institute in 1879, when she began taking botany and field classes (under Mr. J.W. Oliver, the Botany Lecturer). She took First Class Certificates at the Science and Art Department as well as attending German and French under Dr. Dammann who 'looked upon her as the most brilliant pupil he had ever had in his professional career' (Hughes 1890: 18).

Naden entered Mason College (the forerunner of the University of Birmingham) in the autumn of 1881. A year earlier, on 1 October 1880, T.H. Huxley had opened the Mason Science College's new building in Edmund Street, Birmingham. The speech that he gave that day survives and was published as *Science and Culture* (Huxley 1882). Although Naden had not yet begun her student life at Mason College it would not be unreasonable to expect that, as part of the intellectual Birmingham community, she was in the audience for such an auspicious occasion. Indeed, Huxley's speech can be read as a template for the education and choices that Naden would pursue for the rest of her short life. It is a passionate plea for the championing of the teaching of the physical sciences. This would take primacy over a classical literary education, traditionally based on theology, that put the earth at the centre of the universe, with nature as a force for evil. Huxley dismisses such outdated notions and his post-Darwinian attitude is most clearly expressed when he states that: 'It is even more certain that nature is the expression of a definite order with which nothing interferes, and that the chief business of mankind is to learn that order and govern themselves accordingly' (1881: 15). Huxley recognises that the challenges were immense. Even in the post-Darwinian 1880s, physical science was still in its infancy, having only begun to emerge in the 1850s after centuries of classical education.[5] In 1880,

[5] Huxley altered his views about physical science much later in *Evolution and Ethics* (1895) by suggesting that evolution was something that could be manipulated through, for example, population control.

though, anything other than a strict adherence to empiricism and factual evidence allied to the deployment of free reasoning, and the teaching of such, was anathema for Huxley. One need not neglect a literary education, he argues, and for a scientist to be a rounded individual one needs the balanced education that Mason College aspired to provide. He urges the pursuit of French and German as vital for scientific training but argues that one must also cultivate 'a clear understanding of the conditions of social life on the part of both the capitalist and the operative, and their agreement upon the common principles of social action' (1881: 22). In other words, Huxley asks the science students of Mason College to embrace what we call now sociology and to do their duty in understanding and becoming involved in politics. Had Huxley taken a personal interest in Naden's development throughout her time at Mason College, he would have felt that she had vindicated his inaugural speech. The early indications of her blossoming talents were thoroughly justified and a contemporary witness, Mrs Houghton, notes: '[It was at Mason College] that Miss Naden first became conscious of the full extent of her powers, and assumed that leadership which was her birthright' (Hughes 1890: 19).

One of the most important moments of Naden's time at Mason College came in the spring of 1883. The Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society's decision to establish a 'Sociological Section' to devote themselves to studying Herbert Spencer's immense lifelong project *Synthetic Philosophy* (i.e. the development and application of evolutionary theories to philosophy and sociology) reflected Spencer's enormous influence and popularity during the latter part of the nineteenth century (especially in America). Naden's close alignment to Spencer is important in terms of the evolutionary narratives in her work. This is because it is the relationship between Spencer's philosophical applications of evolution to society and Darwin's more rigorous scientific methods that permeates Naden's writing.

These are some of the pivotal points in Naden's early development and their influence will be clarified in my analysis of her in subsequent chapters. Influenced as she is by her mentor Lewins, Darwin and her much-admired Spencer, Naden also considers the essence of belief systems such as mysticism, spiritualism, Buddhism, theosophy and, during her Far-Eastern tour, she also shows an interest in Jainism. Many of these beliefs were at odds with the mainstream thought of scientific naturalists such as Huxley. Naden shows, however, her desire to develop a philosophy that, whilst it might not be all-inclusive, at least recognised other beliefs, and was underpinned by Darwinian natural selection. Naden believes that science is part of an evolutionary story that, when applied to society, in a Spenserian manner, could lead to society evolving to a perfected future state. Through the influence of Lewins, towards the end of her life Naden became associated with some of the most prominent freethinkers of the time, such as Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, as she moved closer to atheism without ever fully embracing it.

Thesis Objectives

My thesis analyses evolutionary narratives in Naden's poetry and prose to understand her scientific and religious development and to assess whether the posthumous reputation, created by her circle of friends, is an accurate one. I will achieve this by foregrounding what she herself describes as 'The land where Poetry and Science meet' (Naden 1881: 129). That is, where her scientific language forms a nexus with prose and poetry through the lens of the hitherto dominant cultural context of religion. By the 1870s/1880s the emerging scientific discoveries were changing Victorian discourse and, importantly, the poetry and prose, that had previously been steeped in religious language. Such cultural discourse, in this post-Darwinian era of increasing secularisation, begins to give primacy to human experience in the light of science and especially in relation to nature. As Levine observes: 'the world had to be reconstituted not from divine inheritance but from arbitrary

acts of human will' (1988: viii). Levine's observation manifests itself in Naden's work, where nature dominates without reference to design or a controlling Godhead. This does not necessarily imply a rejection of religion but it is often an important signifier that a writer has been influenced to some degree by evolutionary thought. In Naden's case, such a signifier is indicative of her journey from a religious to a secular world view. For prose and poetry writers, this lack of reference to God would have been unthinkable a century before. Darwin's reluctance to give up his belief in a supernatural designer becomes even more clearly stated in Naden's writing and this is surely an indication of evolutionary narratives seeping into the work of a post-Darwinian writer.

The palpability of Naden's immersion in Darwinism and Spencerism emerges throughout her poetry and prose as major motifs of science, religion and nature; the evolution of each motif in Naden's own mind manifest themselves throughout her philosophical beliefs. It is both the subject of evolution that her work is so steeped in and the evolution of her philosophical views, that constitute Naden's evolutionary narratives. It is important to define as accurately as possible, therefore, what I mean by Darwinism and Spencerism and how they relate to the overall theory of evolution to understand Naden's use of evolutionary narratives throughout her work.

The first use of the word Darwinism was by T.E. Huxley in the *Westminster Review*, (April 1860) and his candid interpretation at that time was, as Moore comments: 'the mutability of species and the natural descent of existing species from a few primitive forms' (1991: 354-5). Throughout the 1860s, however, this definition of Darwinism became loaded with meanings appropriated for it by supporters and detractors alike. Whether they were scientists, philosophers, deists, theists, theologians or the wider populace, anyone could create their own version of Darwinism, as it began, inexorably, to enter common discourse. This multivalency inevitably applied to Darwin's supporters who,

immediately after the publication of the *Origin*, enthused about a new orthodoxy within evolutionary biology; an overarching means by which to understand the world without a supernatural creator. I will consider how Naden recognises Darwinism throughout the thesis. By the time that she entered her scientific training in 1879, despite its many detractors and misunderstandings about what it was, Naden would have had a very clear understanding of Darwinism. To her it meant descent with modification, natural selection and human evolution (Moore 1991: 360) including sexual selection, although each of these terms would continue to be contested, as they often were, during her own lifetime.

Naden is interested in the wider subject of evolution, however, extending from biology into sociology and this is evident through the influence of Herbert Spencer. In tracing her evolutionary narratives, therefore, this thesis will encompass the less contested but also much less-used concept of Spencerism. The challenge of providing a definition of Spencerism, despite the immensity of Spencer's reputation during Naden's lifetime, is testament to the fact that, whilst the work of Darwin has continued to evolve, through research and discovery, Spencerism is considered a largely redundant term in our own cultural context. His ten-volume philosophical opus *Synthetic Philosophy*, written over his lifetime, is now almost akin to an extinct species which is remarkable given the high esteem in which he was held during Naden's life. My reading of Naden for the influence of Spencer is necessarily historicist because, as J.W. Burrow argues: 'Even today Spencer symbolizes this aspect of the period all the more satisfactorily because of the subsequent repudiation of him' (1970: 180). Burrow also supplies a usable description of Spencerism which, whilst it can never satisfactorily encompass the behemoth of Spencer's output, provides some boundaries within which I can analyse Naden's writing; Burrow describes it as follows: 'an attempt to apply a formula of evolution whose central idea was the development from simple to complex, purporting to be derived from the fundamental laws

of matter and motion, to every kind of phenomenon throughout the universe' (1970: 194). Burrow's description of Spencerian societal structures passing from simple to complex only takes us so far. The complex inter-play of society, composed of its people, reacting to and modifying itself according to its surroundings, like an organism, is vital to an understanding of Spencer's view of evolution. Spencer's ambition is to achieve a taxonomic system that would clarify all the variables that impact upon the societal organism. Whether they are caused by the natural world or by individuals reacting to their own circumstances, Spencer wants to understand how the interrelatedness of these factors compounds to produce a society that evolves. In such analyses, it is vital for Spencer, that the individual is paramount. It is how individual actions lead to the evolution of the very societies they inhabit that feeds his ideas of a progression from the simple to the complex. It also means that Spencer believes it necessary to return to societies' bygone conditions to understand their subsequent development. Whether this is a progression or a regression, both views are possible. Spencer is much more interested, however, in the notion of progress, as is Naden, and I will show that this is a major influence on her work.

My intention is to show how Naden draws on her skills as a polymath and how this forms a nexus of ideas that shapes her as a writer and thinker. Naden's own self-proclaimed ambition is to be remembered as a philosopher who also writes poetry. This drives a small group of friends, notably led by Robert Lewins, to create what I describe throughout the thesis as Naden's afterlife. Lewins's objective is to foreground and re-publish Naden's philosophical writings from the post-Darwinian world of the 1870s/1880s. By effectively trying to establish Naden in her own era Lewins also seeks to fashion her posthumous reputation as a philosopher. My thesis both analyses and then challenges this endeavour. I achieve this by acknowledging the relative success of Naden's poetry compared to her short-lived Hylo-Idealistic philosophy. My argument is that the fashioning

of her afterlife, led by Lewins, attempted to give primacy to Naden's philosophical beliefs. It was her poetry, however, highly-rated by many of her contemporaries at the time, that has ensured her recognition to this day.

Thesis Literature Review and Structure

Naden was largely unknown until the latter part of the twentieth century when the academic community began to rediscover minor Victorian female poets and she attracted some critical attention for her post-Darwinian views. Phillip E. Smith II and Susan Harris Smith began the revival with a short essay in *Victorian Poetry* (1977). James R. Moore (1987) wrote a provocative essay titled 'The Erotics of Evolution: Constance Naden and Hylo-Idealism' and Nour Alarabi (PhD 2009) discussed religion in *A God of their Own: Religion in the Poetry of Emily Bronte, Christina Rossetti and Constance Naden*. Marion Thain (MPhil 1998a) in *Love's Mirror: Constance Naden and Reflections on a Feminist Poetics*, Lyssa Randolph (PhD 2001) in *The New Woman and the New Science: Feminist Writing 1880-1900*, Patricia Murphy's essay (2002) 'Fated Marginalisation: Women and Science in the Poetry of Constance Naden', Andrea Kaston Tange's essay (2006) 'Constance Naden and the Erotics of Evolution: Mating the Woman of Letters with the Man of Science', and Catherine Birch (PhD 2011) in *Evolutionary Feminism in Late-Victorian Women's Poetry: Mathilde Blind, Constance Naden and May Kendall* all offered feminist readings. I will be quoting from some of these important contributions to the body of work surrounding Naden throughout the thesis. The preeminent books about Darwin's influence on nineteenth century poets were Lionel Stevenson (1932) *Darwin Among the Poets* and Georg Roppen (1956) *Evolution and Poetic Belief: A Study in Some Victorian and Modern Writers* although neither mentioned Naden. John Holmes's (2009) *Darwin's Bards. British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* is described as 'one of the most significant contributions to recent discussions of Darwinism and its impact on

our culture' (Bannerjee 2014). Holmes (2009: 189-197) devotes a short section to Naden entitled 'A Darwinian sex comedy: Constance Naden's 'Evolutional Erotics'' and a small number of academics analyse samples of Naden's poetry usually focussing on the playful humour she displays, in a small number of poems, especially in relation to Darwinian theories. Also, apart from Moore's essay (1987) and Alarabi's PhD (2009), little critical attention has been given to her religious beliefs. Although interest in Naden will continue to develop from these works, there has not been a systematic re-reading and subsequent analysis of her complete poetry, prose, letters and miscellany.

To address these issues, I have adopted the following approach to structure my thesis. In Chapter One, I analyse Naden's early poetry by considering how she engages with the main themes of science and religion (including her brief engagements with paganism, polytheism, Christian monotheism, mysticism and pantheism), sexual selection and nature. I acknowledge that, in both scientific and religious communities, there was a general move in these two decades towards an approval of the principles of evolution but that this stopped short, on both sides, of a complete acceptance of the principle of Darwinian natural selection.

In Chapter Two, I show how, in her later poetry, Naden skilfully weaves together her scientific beliefs and religious doubt into evolutionary narrative storylines. I adopt the same thematic structure as for Chapter One. Here Naden shows more confidence and increasing technical skill but also a hardening of her attitude towards organised state religion. Both chapters also demonstrate her desire to commune with nature as well as her use of humour, especially when writing about sexual selection. They show Naden's varying emotional states driven by the changing seasons and the apparent absurdities of sexual attraction.

In Chapter Three, I consider these elements from Naden's poetry alongside her attempt to forge a new syncretic philosophy, Hylo-Idealism, through her prose writing. This chapter recognises her increasing agnosticism and the emerging influence of Herbert Spencer. Here I will show that while Naden undoubtedly went from religion to agnosticism and possibly even atheism, this was not a linear progression. I will argue that her beliefs remained fluid and that this fluidity, although not unusual for this time, has not been adequately explored in Naden studies until now. I am interested in the way that Naden uses her prose to form her evolutionary narratives in communicating her philosophical beliefs.

In Chapter Four, I look at the five years following Naden's death that form a key component of Naden's afterlife. My research will be the first to address the question about how far the fashioning of Naden's reputation after her death by Lewins (and to a lesser extent her circle of friends) successfully established her within the evolutionary narratives of her own lifetime. In providing a re-reading of Naden in her cultural context I will argue that the narrative that has been provided to us, by her mentor Lewin's re-fashioning of Naden after her lifetime, is not necessarily accurate. I will show that Lewins and a small circle of acquaintances attempted to create an afterlife for Naden that was driven by their desire to ensure that she was read retrospectively in the light of contemporary debates after her death. Overall, my approach provides the most comprehensive exploration of Naden's journey so far, by rereading Naden in the light of her post-Darwinian journey. Through the first detailed analysis of all her poetry, as well as her scientific essays and letters, I will provide a more nuanced version of Naden.

My re-reading of Naden's entire output in her poetry, essays, letters and miscellany adopts both a chronological and a historicist approach. It has not been my intention to provide a detailed analysis of Hylo-Idealism. Nor do I attempt an exposition of Spencer's opus *Synthetic Philosophy*, although both areas could constitute new additions to the body

of knowledge about Naden for future researchers. Even though she might have gone on to make her name in the field of philosophy Hylo-Idealism was not destined to become mainstream and so it is her much more culturally significant engagement with religion and science that is the focus of my thesis. Her philosophy and alignment with Herbert Spencer I regard as another stage in the body of work that will come to be written about Naden in the future. Primarily, my thesis is concerned with evolutionary narratives born out of Naden's religious and scientific views rather than an analysis of the philosophical debates of the period.

This introduction has outlined the main objectives of the thesis, the structure and an explanation of what I mean by evolutionary narratives. By introducing a synopsis of Naden's life I have shown that Naden's intellectual journey makes her a key person to study to understand how her religious beliefs and scientific training, during this post-Darwinian period, act upon and shape her development. Also, by positing the existence of an afterlife for Naden I have shown the importance of my systematic re-reading of Naden's entire work in clarifying for the first time whether the version of Naden that has been passed down to us is indeed an accurate one. In the first chapter I will begin the process by looking at her early poetry up to 1886.

Chapter 1 - The Land where Poetry and Science meet: Early poetry (1877-1886)

BEYOND the realm of dull and slumberous Night
I long have wandered with unwearied feet;
The land where Poetry and Science meet
Streaks the far distance with a magic light:
Fair visions glide before my dazzled sight,
And shine, and change, and pass with motion fleet,
But never clear, and steadfast, and complete
In one transcendent brilliancy unite.

I know, the seeming discord is but mine;
The glory is too great for mortal eyes,
All powerless to discover the divine
And perfect harmony of earth and skies:
I know that each confused and tortuous line,
To fuller sight, in true perspective lies. (Naden 1881: 129)

In her sonnet 'Undiscerned Perfection' Naden's narrator is journeying tirelessly beyond a state of dismal darkness to a land of magic light. The exact meaning of the two opposing emotional states is ambiguous and this is, as I shall demonstrate, often the case in Naden's early poetry. Given Naden's scientific training up to the publication of this poem, one can read the poem as her personal quest to progress from ignorance to knowledge. This questioning and indefatigable search for enlightenment is a key part of Naden's psyche and forms an important part of her spiritual and secular journey. The chapter begins the analysis of that journey by providing a rereading of Naden's entire output of poetry during this period to uncover the evolutionary narratives that underpin almost everything that she published.

In the first section of this chapter I consider Naden's early poetic engagement with science and religion. These two areas are inter-related across all Naden's oeuvre and one informs the other inextricably. This is because, despite scientific progress throughout the 1870s/1880s, science is unable to lay claim to absolute truth. As such, the boundaries between science and religion are blurred and individual viewpoints can be fluid and

elusive. Partly, this can be explained by scientists, like Naden, searching for a secular meaning to life without a supernatural God. Naden's early poetry reflects her search for such meaning through her scientific training but also by attempting to understand religious sensibilities too.

The second section deals with sexual selection, a theme that Naden begins to explore in the aftermath of *The Descent of Man* (1871). Her treatment of the subject, in her early poetry, reflects the fact that this is a part of Darwinism that is neither generally accepted nor believed for many years, given its complex associations with aesthetics and the extent and nature of female choice. So, Naden explores sexual selection in relation to the choices demanded of both women and men when choosing a career ahead of love. She also considers how sexual selection can be subverted by deceit and the consequences if a poor choice is made and one is trapped in a relationship. Also, she playfully makes fun of male and female sexual selection by considering what can happen when cosmetics (effectively human plumage) either misleads or does not create the desired effect.

The third section covers Naden's sonnets which are a celebration of the natural world and offer a vital insight into Naden's state of mind during these formative years. Her awe and love of nature are manifest as she provides a sonnet sequence that details the fluctuating seasons. She does not attempt to create a heightened poetic language, through extensive use of metaphor, but uses language to connect intimately with her own changing emotional states throughout the year. As James Krasner observes: 'post-Darwinian nature writers, while profoundly attentive to landscape and biology, choose a mode of representing nature based on visual perception that leads them inevitably toward a more abstract and psychological portrayal of natural landscape' (1992: 4). This psychological tension and the manifestation of varying emotional states, driven by the natural world, is an important evolutionary narrative to be explored in this section.

Naden's work builds on her scientific education and strongly suggests that she read and understood Darwin. Whether she entirely accepts his views and the extent to which they permeate her output, especially in relation to natural selection, will be considered through my analysis of her work. Prevailing scientific theories about evolution permeate 1870s/1880s society and, as Gillian Beer (2000) shows throughout *Darwin's Plots*, whether understood fully or not, they tend to become part of normal cultural discourse. It is inconceivable that Naden, as a scholar, would have simply absorbed evolutionary theory without a very rigorous period of study into every aspect of Darwin's grand idea. Naden is unlike many of the writers of the time, who display the sort of characteristics that Levine identifies, in his own attempt to 'concentrate on writers who were probably not directly "influenced" by scientific writing' (1988: 3). Levine's focus, though, as he writes, is based 'on the absorption and testing of Darwinian ideas and attitudes (even when the writers are not thinking of them as Darwinian)' (1988: 3). Both Beer and Levine are particularly interested in understanding this often-unwitting absorption of Darwinism, whereas Naden's thinking is based on a very full and informed understanding of its precepts. Naden sees science as a force for progress; but theories must be verified by facts, otherwise scientists can be accused of simply having over-active imaginations. Darwin, however, believes that although he had glimpsed how evolution worked he feared that he could never fully understand it due to its remarkable complexity. For Darwin, the imagination plays an important role in not only facilitating to fill gaps in understanding but in conveying complex ideas to the public. His more cautious language of the 1860s/1870s, however, contrasts with the increasingly confident post-Darwinian narratives of scientists and writers such as Naden throughout the 1870s/1880s. The challenge facing these writers is to communicate the complexity of the emerging sciences in a way that could be accessible to as many readers as possible. Laura Otis describes their response to such a challenge:

'Whether studying physical or biological events, scientists depicted the world imaginatively so that they could draw inferences about invisible phenomena based on observable effects. Picturing the unknown, they acted like novelists or poets, inviting readers to imagine hidden worlds' (2002: xxi). Although Naden's prose writing follows Otis's assertion (as I shall explore in Chapter Three), her poetry goes further because, exceptionally for a woman of her time, she is sage-like in her ability to engage with her audience as both scientist and poet. In her first major poem, she demonstrates this ability by focusing on one of the most important of the sciences in the 1870s/1880s, astronomy.

Science and Religion

'The Astronomer' is a dramatic monologue that sets up the tensions between scientific discovery and religious doubt that is apparent in much of Naden's early poetry. This is the longest poem from *Songs and Sonnets* at thirty-five stanzas. Its metronomic ABAB rhyme scheme, with a spondee commencing the first line of each stanza, within an iambic pentameter, conveys a relentless mood of fixity and of certainty in the laws of science. The choice of an astronomer to begin the collection, however, is an early attempt by Naden to consider whether an understanding between science and religion is possible. The astronomer's observation of the fixed laws of nature, through the motion of the planets, glimpses such splendour that it inevitably leads him to ponder its source. His detached, cold and clinical scientific nature, though, provides a sharp contrast to some of Naden's later key religious characters. These characters are introduced in subsequent poems and for them the heavens are also a source of wonder but from a spiritual perspective.

In highlighting the astronomer's concern about whether cosmology has any intrinsic value when it is compared to experiencing the natural world, Naden foregrounds his ignorance of nature. This tension between his own awed stargazing and a peasant who experiences the joys of the earth is manifest here:

Bright hieroglyphs I read in heaven's book;
But oft, with eyes too dim for these,
In half-regretful ignorance I look
On common fields and trees.

Scant fare for wife and child the fisher gains
From yon broad belt of lucent grey;
Rude peasants till those green and golden plains;
Am I more wise than they? (1881: 3-4)

The astronomer occupies a lofty position, able to view the heavens but also the natural world below, with which he is unfamiliar, and the emotional states of isolation and detachment that this induces runs throughout the poem. Mortal desires for companionship and love are anathema for the astronomer who is convinced that a scientific explanation of the heavens will illuminate our understanding of the earth's mysteries and, therefore, he refuses to be constrained by an earthbound perspective:

Yet hope and ecstasy desert me not,
But coldly shine, like moonlit snows;
This earthly dream, renounced yet unforgot,
To heavenly splendour grows. (1881: 5)

The astronomer rejects love as a replacement for his career and any 'ecstasy' is experienced in terms of scientific discovery rather than temporal or religious affection. Naden's use of Urania (the muse of astronomy, astrology and universal love) in a dream sequence is, ostensibly, to advise the astronomer that one must determinedly keep to one's chosen path. The astronomer's emerging professional and spiritual doubts are manifest through an awareness of his mortality when set against nature's elemental forces. The dream sequence suggests that human mortality and our short lifespans have influenced the development of superstition and polytheism to counter our natural fear of death. To evolve from these early impediments will be a slow process but ultimately our reward will be an emerging scientific 'Truth':

Slow-conquering Truth loves well the joyous noon,
But silent midnight gave her birth;
The cone of darkness that o'ershades the moon

Revealed the orbëd earth.

Man knelt to constellated suns supreme,
But as he knelt to golden clods,
Nor, till he ceased to worship, e'er could dream
The greatness of his gods. (1881: 7)

The astronomer's science and imagination unite in his God-like visions of the cosmos. His teleological view sees mankind progressing towards a future state of perfection but a pre-ordained one within the cosmos. The optimism for science, the necessity of imagination and the grand design of the cosmos contrasts with a 'lack of earth-born hope' (1881: 10) for a mere commingling with nature on earth. This, of course, is at odds with Darwin because, as David Gordon points out: 'Darwin does not promise an indefinite future for the *human* species but only for species themselves, which have often died out while others have survived catastrophes or have come into being' (2002: 32). Naden presents a more nuanced view for humankind than Gordon because she believes that it is possible to progress to a state of perfection, though not teleogically, whilst also believing in harmony with nature. Self-divisions which emerge throughout much of Naden's early poetry are apparent here; her scientific training means that she appears to be sceptical about the astronomer's teleological belief in God. Naden's belief in progress reflects the emerging influence of Spencer, whose non-teleological belief in the idea of a gradualist progression of society, is based on human evolution within the environment:

I were content, though palsied, sightless, dumb,
If, blasting toil-worn brain and eye,
The heights and depths of human joy to come
Shone clear, before I die. (1881: 10)

At this stage Naden leaves the tension unresolved by ending the poem with the astronomer reflecting on his mortality and hoping to see some evidence of this Spencerian notion of progress before he dies.

The fictive is explored in four poems in which imagination plays a major role in the creation of religious superstition. They act as a counterpoint to the lofty musings of the astronomer grounded, as they are, in the temporal beliefs of mortals for whom the stars represent supernatural wonderment and awe. Also, the poems illustrate Naden's interest in paganism and its early impact on Christianity. In 'The Last Druid', the despair and isolation that the druid feels manifests as a lack of fear for the Christian teaching of divine retribution. His resigned acceptance that he has no way of knowing the truth of such beliefs means that he does not feel the need to waste his time on earth considering it:

> They say, when death is oe'er
> Man lives for evermore
> In heaven or hell;
> They call Thee Love and Light:
> Alas! They may be right,
> I cannot tell. (1881: 20)

The Druid's weary questioning of the point of his own life is juxtaposed with the bleakness of his natural surroundings with moaning mountain winds and dim deserted skies. The inference here is that his psychological wellbeing and the natural world are inextricably linked. His polytheistic beliefs are seemingly being swept away by a new monotheism that he may not have the energy to fight:

> Oh, Christ, to whom they sing,
> Thou art not yet the King
> Of this wild spot; (1881: 20)

His riposte, however, is that Christianity's supernatural creator does not control the natural world that the Druid understands and inhabits.

Having considered Christianity's doctrine, the Druid asks that God prove this power and show beneficence in ending his life, rather than sadism in condemning him to a continued old age. The aged Druid has become world weary and seemingly unable to resist this new force. The backdrop to the poem is, therefore, the emergence of a powerful, confident and assertive Christian monotheism. Crucially, the Druid is uninterested in the

Christian doctrine and his own beliefs determine that he wants his final rest to be a harmonious one with nature rather than any kind of eternal afterlife:

> Give me not heaven, but rest;
> In earth's all sheltering breast
> Hide me from scorn: (1881: 21)

The Druid's pessimistic conclusion that his beliefs are as dead leaves suggests that Christianity was potentially a malevolent force that could condemn those that disagreed with it to a life of damnation. This leads inevitably to feelings of solitude and separation and the Druid's realisation that his race has become extinct apart from himself. The final irony is that neither the spiritual realm of his own polytheism nor the new Christian monotheism, offers any comfort but neither does nature whose dim and deserted skies will not allow him to die.

Naden's exploration of paganism and the themes of loneliness and isolation are evident in most of her poems with a religious theme. 'The Alchemist' has spent a lifetime, not waiting for God to reveal himself, but in trying to find the secret of eternal life. In the search for the elixir of life (the fabled philosopher's stone) alchemy often relied on scientific principles. By Victorian times, however, it ceded to the emergence of modern science. Implicit in the poem is the tacit assumption that there is no God because the elderly alchemist is searching for everlasting life on earth rather than accepting a Christian afterlife. Unlike the desire for harmony in nature through the paganism of 'The Last Druid', the Alchemist views nature as something to be conquered, although he may well die in such a struggle. This parallels 'The Astronomer' searching the heavens for answers, whilst feeling detachment from the earth below. The tension in the poem occurs because the Alchemist is trying to conquer nature rather than harmonise with it. His desire for a godless immortality overshadows any enjoyment of a normal human life span. This subversion of the evolutionary struggle with an elixir to render that struggle irrelevant, is

intentionally disturbing. The conflict between eternal life through religion and eternal life through a quasi-scientific discovery that seeks to conquer nature is left ambiguous and unresolved. This motif recurs through the nature sonnets later in this collection and in 'The Elixir of Life' in Chapter Two.

In 'The Roman Philosopher to Christian Priests' the protagonist's daughter is about to convert to Christian monotheism. Through a composed and eloquent lecture about faith to the Christian priests the philosopher argues that the Christian God should have no special place accorded to him in this harsh universe. Although he does not deny them their faith, it is Christians, he believes, who 'choose to dream in starlight,' (1881: 16) through mythologies. This is ironic given the complex mythology of Roman polytheism, but it is understandable given that paganism is here beginning to cede to Christianity. Like 'The Astronomer' the aged speaker looks at the stars with a casual acceptance that life exists on other worlds:

> What if the dwellers in yon faintest star
> Deem its weak light more glorious than the sun? (1881: 16)

The philosopher has accepted the teachings of the materialist and stoic Zeno; a key tenet of this school was the need to live in harmony with nature and to see ourselves as existing as part of one organic entity. Christianity, he asserts, lacks the purity of the ancient beliefs:

> Clear truth to vulgar minds no comfort yields; (1881: 17)

Philosophy and science represent progress and not belief in religions which appeal to young and impressionable minds:

> But knowledge calms the heart, and clears the eye:
> A thousand faiths there are, but none is true, (1881: 17)

The philosopher is critical of the Christian notion of hellfire and damnation and his positivism is contrasted with the religion that his daughter has embraced. Although he does not fear it, there is a despair born out of the emergence of the new religion. The final three

stanzas end with threats of bloody retribution should anything happen to his daughter. Madeline Daniell, a close companion in the final years of Naden's life, remarks that the poem: 'is not a common girlish song – the passionate anger of the Roman father against the priests, whose teaching had robbed him of his child's love, and the strong spirit of the old Roman breaking out in the last verse, expresses vividly the spirit of declining Paganism' (1890: xi). Both the druid and the Roman philosopher display a pagan disregard for Christian teaching and concomitant lack of any fear of retribution by God in an afterlife. These are key motifs in Naden's early work as evidenced by her companion Daniell's fervent description above.

Naden's engagement with the distant polytheistic past, and its eclipse by monotheism, contrasts with a post-religious society searching for an imagined pre-religious and more innocent age in 'The Pilgrim'. The medieval bard's frustration at his people's fatigue with their post-religious materialistic existence leads him on a pilgrimage. His society, ostensibly one of plenty and inequality, with a spiritually unfulfilled populace, is seemingly a reference to late Victorian society: 'And some were rich, some miserably poor, And each for other felt a dull contempt;' (1881: 39). Such emptiness preoccupies this poem, which Naden masks by the indeterminate location, that distances it from contemporary Victorian society. The theory that the character of 'The Pilgrim' was based on Lewins, is fleetingly mentioned by Nellie C. Hayman who describes the poem as 'a fine attempt to depict the genesis, by Dr. Lewins, of Hylo-Idealism, or Auto-Morphism (Selfism)' (1894: 6). To read the poem, as Hayman does, by locating Lewins as its principle character seems to stretch its meaning too far. One suspects Lewins's own hand at work here in fashioning Hayman's narrative many years after the poem had been published. Indeed, the poem seems a closer representation of Darwin's lonely struggles

with his evolutionary theory, with stanza five evocative of his travels on HMS Beagle through the wilds of Patagonia:

> No kindred nature deemed his purpose good;
> The vision and the promise were his own:
> High hills he climbed; through many a tangled wood
> He cut his way, in darkness and alone,
> Or built a trembling bridge where wild waves tossed,
> Or in a fragile boat the surges crossed. (1881: 40)

Although there are no contemporary accounts of Naden being influenced by William Blake, the reference to a tangled wood (rather than a Darwinian tangled bank) is reminiscent of Blake's 'tangled roots' in 'The Voice of the Ancient Bard'; in the previous verse the pilgrim is searching for 'the ancient innocence' again, an oblique reference to Blake. Blake's poem is an entreaty to the reader to embrace nature and the power of our imagination. In doing so, one needs to be wary, as the final line counsels, of being led by others, surely a reference by Blake to religious institutions:

> Folly is an endless maze,
> Tangled roots perplex her ways.
> How many have fallen there!
> They stumble all night over bones of the dead,
> And feel they know not what but care,
> And wish to lead others when they should be led. (Blake 1982: 42)

The middle section of the poem is ambiguous but Swinburne provides a contemporary view that Blake's poem 'summons to judgment the young and single-spirited, that by right of the natural impulse of delight in them they may give sentence against the preachers of convention and assumption' (1868: 117). Whether Naden has in mind a young Lewins or a young Darwin, the message is the same; that the young pilgrim's journey to enlightenment is a path that will not be found in religion but through science, nature and the imagination. These powerful tenets, when allied to the previous poem's pagan rejection of Christianity, are deeply embedded in Naden's early poetry.

The five poems that I have analysed so far have been an intriguing juxtaposition of the tensions between science and religious doubt or between various facets of religious belief. The feelings of fear, isolation and resignation that such feelings can engender are explored by Naden through the voices of old men, perhaps reflecting the rigidity of age in embracing new ideas. Whilst 'The Astronomer' sets up these tensions the others are placed at various points in ancient history to reflect polytheistic pasts or the progress of monotheism. The ambivalence of each poem's ending seems, at this stage, to reflect Naden's own insecurities and uncertainties when trying to accommodate science and religion and the willingness of people to accept change.

Naden's oblique criticism of organised religion continues in three poems which all engage with Catholicism. Having engaged sympathetically with paganism's conflict with Christianity, Naden is not so sympathetic when considering Catholicism's impact upon the lives it seeks to influence. In 'The Confession' a young woman admits to her Catholic Priest that she has kept secret the murder of a potential suitor by her lover, who has fled. The shocking story is matched by the visceral nature of the young woman's confession and attempt to absolve her now dead lover's crime to save his soul. Her attempt to take punishment for his crimes through confession is disturbing as is the suggestion that the priest has such power to discharge. Although the message in the poem is a subtle one, the ritual of Catholic confession had troubled many Victorians from the mid-century onwards. As Denis Paz argues: 'What especially affronted the Victorian middle classes, however, were the secrecy of the practice and the fact that women went to confession on their own, without the sanction of their fathers, brothers, or husbands' (1992: 276). I amplify Paz's point later in this chapter when I reference William Murphy and his inflammatory anti-Catholic speeches, of the 1860s, which dealt in part with the supposed evils of Catholic confession. In this poem Naden does not foreground the father confessor as necessarily

evil; also, there is no overt sexual element to the confession as Susan Bernstein argues was a concern for critics of Catholic confession: 'The Victorian anti-Catholic position centred its critique on the authority that father confessors wielded in the private–that is, sexual-lives of its English penitents' (1997: 47). Nonetheless, the lack of patriarchal authority for the young woman, the recalcitrant lover and the father confessor provide a subversive quality to the poem and its disordered gendered power structures that imply a criticism of Catholicism.

Unlike the Roman philosopher and the Druid, who have both effectively lost their gods to the new religion, 'The Carmelite Nun' is a member of an established order within the Catholic tradition, and yet the nun also displays the same lonely isolation and detachment. In her case, this is because God has not revealed himself, despite her constant praying, causing her to doubt her faith. In 'The Sister of Mercy' Naden engages with the subject of another devout Catholic order who took vows of complete dedication to God. This was an active ministry that would have been visible within many local communities, including Birmingham, and they became known as 'walking nuns' as they moved around these communities.[6] They offered special care for vulnerable women and girls and this was of interest to Naden who later (around 1883) taught at Mrs Rogers' Memorial Home for Friendless Girls, Penelope Place, 47. Bristol Street, Birmingham that opened in 1878 (Hughes 1890: 16). This is one of several poems in which, moving from elderly male to young female protagonists, Naden seems to be working out her own views on religion and the choices demanded of devotion to a doctrine, especially when those choices are unnatural ones in human evolutionary terms.

[6] Founded in 1831 by Catherine McAuley to care for the sick, the poor and the uneducated. When she died, in 1841, McAuley had introduced ten Sisters of Mercy locations in Ireland, two in England and one in Birmingham. They were not nuns in the sense of devoting their lives to prayer and contemplation but social reformers who worked in the local community and hence the derivation of their name.

Naden briefly considers the late-nineteenth century vogue for mysticism in ‘The Mystic’s Prayer’, where prayers are held in a ‘mute’ cathedral surrounded by the tombs and statues of dead souls who neither see nor hear. Herein lies the Mystic’s mission, which is to seek a union with God and there to know ‘the heart of Death, wherein are life and youth’ (1881: 37). The inherent belief of mysticism that a union with God can be found through contemplation and submissiveness rather than intellectual enquiry leads the Mystic to plead with God for a sign that such a union is possible:

> Not martyrdom I crave, nor length of days;
> But grant me, Lord, ere this frail form decays,
> The perfect union that my soul has sought,
> The ecstasy that knows nor prayer nor praise,
> The raptured silence, unprofaned by thought. (1881: 38)

The tension, as so often in Naden’s early poetry, is left unresolved between the praying Mystic and a silent God. The potential for a union between the two, unencumbered by the intellect, glimpses a possibility that is both rapturous and pure.

Having considered the polytheism of paganism and its early clashes with the monotheism of Christianity, the harshness of Catholicism and the spiritual nature of mysticism, Naden also reflects on pantheism. ‘The Pantheist’s Song of Immortality’ is a poem that is ostensibly about not fearing death which, in Darwinian nature, is everywhere. J. Jakub Pitha suggests that the poem draws on Keats's ‘Ode to Melancholy’, in showing stoicism in the face of death (Pitha 1999: 213). Keatsian melancholy, however, was not a morbid state but a symptom of the transience of our feelings and an appreciation of the intensity of those feelings whilst recognising their briefness. Like the ‘Ode to Melancholy’, sadness and joyousness complement each other in ‘The Pantheist’s Song of Immortality’. The second stanza tacitly acknowledges the lack of an afterlife:

> Her life was one fair dream of friend and lover;
> And were they false - ah, well, she knows it not. (1881: 43)

The phrase in the next stanza that ‘Death is unconscious Life’ (1881: 43) draws upon the Darwinian notions that we should not fear death; we can learn from animals who seem to live their lives in the moment and do not constantly fear their own demise. The previous poems present human reactions to religion, which offers some alleviation from the fear of death, perhaps through an afterlife, or a oneness with nature; it is the latter which this poem conveys. By losing our fear of death it is possible to recognise the importance of nature in the survival of our species, and herein resides our immortality. Naden expresses this in two stanzas:

> What though thy name by no sad lips be spoken,
> And no fond heart shall keep thy memory green?
> Thou yet shalt leave thine own enduring token,
> For earth is not as though thou ne’er hadst been.
>
> See yon broad current, hasting to the ocean,
> Its ripples glorious in the western red:
> Each wavelet passes, trackless; yet its motion
> Has changed for evermore the river bed. (1881: 44)

The minute random variations in species is paralleled with the almost imperceptible changes made to the riverbed, by the wavelets, that are everlasting. Naden connects the harmony of the natural world with the brevity of our existence and the inevitability of death. As Gillian Beer observes:

> The world of forms which the geologist inhabits, the slow phantasmagoria of oceans and continents interchanging, rising and falling as if earth were waves, makes for a tranquil elemental view of the universe, in which time implies an extended scale of existence beyond the span of our minds. (2000: 39)

In the same way that Beer describes scientific and literary prose as a common language in the 1860s, Naden underpins her central motif of pantheism with the knowledge of a scientist and the imagination of a poet. Naden’s connection of the scientific and natural inspires our imagination to reach beyond our finite minds. In the dramatic final stanza, pantheism identifies God, the universe and nature as the same transcendent state, of which materialism and life are merely manifestations:

Be calmly glad, thine own true kindred seeing
In fire and storm, in flowers with dew impearled;
Rejoice in thine imperishable being,
One with the Essence of the boundless world. (1881: 45)

The confidence and energy of the poem's conclusion removes the weariness, the doubts, the troubles of the Roman philosopher, the Druid, the Carmelite Nun, the Mystic and these are all set aside in a confident assertion of pantheism.

As I have shown so far in this chapter, Naden's poetry is underpinned by theories of scientific progress; but it also regresses into the distant past of supernatural religions such as paganism, polytheism or monotheism. Then she glimpses the possibility of threading these disparate strands together through a pantheistic communing with nature. She remains equivocal at this point, though, continuing to explore the various strands of her thinking through science and religion. 'Memory', is a poem that recognises these disparate strands as a function of collective memory and explores how this can influence our future if harnessed positively. It consists of ten four-line stanzas that uses an ABAB cross rhyme scheme to link the two parts of each quatrain. The first two lines of each quatrain provide an upbeat assertion of our memory and the power that it can yield. As with many of the early poems, Naden seems to be equivocal but suggests that amidst these forces will be answers to reconciling science and religion. She appears to be suggesting that by thoughtful considerations of our cultural memory we can evolve towards a better future. If we have no clear goals, however, and use those memories incorrectly or in a self-serving way (perhaps here she means organised religion) then we will fail. Our past experiences live on in our memories and continue to drive our future hopes. In this vein, Naden appears to be juxtaposing religion and science in the next two lines of stanza four:

Glorified reflections of the present;
Spirits of the days that once have been;
Hopes of bright perfection, when life's crescent
Fills the orbëd outline, dimly seen. (1881: 50)

Naden offers a veiled reference to religion in the first two lines and its influence on memory both now and in the past. Collective memory can be subverted and has often been used to serve religious purposes. In the next two lines, it is science that she refers to through the reference to a crescent, traditionally used in astronomy to represent the moon. The 'bright perfection' (1881: 50) that she desires in the future is the Spencerian notion of a perfectly evolved and adapted man in a future state of harmony with his environment. The remainder of the poem raises the question that if we are immortal, then what is the function of memory? Our memory's ability to colour our past as a survival instinct is surely not necessary as we are destined to survive eternally, a solemn prospect indeed:

> Sharpest anguish, meaner things besetting,
> Finds a perfect and a swift relief:
> Man alone, immortal, unforgetting
> Wears the sombre coronal of grief. (1881: 51)

This presupposes that one accepts the Christian doctrine of eternal salvation because, for the remainder of the poem, Naden adopts a non-Christian, secular viewpoint. Since we became sentient creatures our consciousness, the ability to think, to reason, to reflect and to remember sets us apart from other animals whose survival instincts are more to do with living in the moment. Stanza nine develops this point further by suggesting that the earth and man, at a mental and spiritual level, can come together and in such a communing can attain a union that is immortal and natural:

> Yet the earth must yield him free communion,
> Heights of heaven his daring hope must gain,
> Till he joy in that eternal union
> Which the struggling spirit may attain. (1881: 51)

In the final stanza, Naden returns to the power of our cultural memories. Collectively we should draw together what has happened, what is happening now and, in forging a new future based on religion and science coming together, bring us closer to the notion of what is God. Not a supernatural being but an internal energy and one that, in a Darwinian,

pantheistic and Hylo-Idealistic sense, is at one with nature. Naden looks back to the distant past considering the part played by our cultural memory and how the supernatural has found its way there:

> Linking Past, and Present, and Hereafter
> Man shall find a staff, where seems a rod:
> Solemn memories, that check his laughter,
> Draw him nearer to the heart of God. (1881: 52)

If memory is our store of experiences, then knowledge is the accumulation of those experiences. We should strive to ensure that they are based on facts and evidence and the production of hypotheses to support the data. Naden's desire for knowledge manifests itself in three poems that show that such a potentially arduous journey could leave us bewildered by what we find. In 'Light-Born Sorrows' the joy of wisdom is compared to a blind man gaining his sight with the resultant knowledge and perceptions possessing the power to overwhelm the senses. The poem can be read as semi-autobiographical, with Naden contrasting the initial contentedness of the blind man with the responsibility now of learning a new mode of perception, understanding and communication. This has resonance with Naden, herself, and her religious upbringing now being brought into question through her scientific training:

> My dreams were nought but music and sweet scent.
> Now must I link to faithful touch and tone
> A wondrous alien form, unloved, unknown,
> And try to read the face that may be sweet
> When I have learnt its language–not till then. (1881: 53)

Like Darwin, Naden sees the natural world through sensory experiences but this does not lead to true knowledge:

> Interpret mystic features by clear voice,
> Loving the song, must love the plumage too,
> And make the rose's scent explain its hue:
> Thus, keeping faith in beauty, I rejoice,
> (Or hope for joy) in green fields, heavens blue,
> In all my new-found plenty, felt as dearth,
> In all enigmas of this visible earth. (1881: 54)

Sensory experiences are, for Naden, a way of perceiving how the natural world's plants and animals intersect and function together. Whether it is the congruity of a bird's song and its plumage or a rose's scent and its colour she believes that this is nature harmonising with the environment. We can learn much from these experiences when considering human evolution:

> Amid all discords, through all thunder-strife,
> My soul shall glory in perfected life. (1881: 54)

Whilst recognising the challenges, Naden believes in human evolution towards perfection within the environment, but in an evolutionary and philosophical spirit rather than a teleological sense.

In 'Light at Eventide' there is no easy path to enlightenment but in a rigorous and diligent Darwinian search for knowledge, for Naden, 'The man who truly strives can never fail' (1881: 46). The poem begins with the notion that good and evil are in a sense interchangeable and that this provides a certain harmony in nature. The fading light of evening is a metaphor for the doubt that can overshadow such a path. Learning to live with the gloom, however, prepares one for the light that will inevitably come through the pursuit of knowledge. Naden uses the term 'despairing and alone' (1881: 46) as she did in 'The Last Druid' (1881: 19) to reinforce this sense of isolation in the pursuit of such a cause. The Druid is resigned to monotheism but in 'Light at Eventide' it is science that threatens to overwhelm current beliefs. The path to knowledge is reminiscent of Darwin's tangled bank, overgrown with obstacles. Whilst the pursuit of truth is compared to a beautiful garland, on closer inspection it contains some of nature's poison in the form of scarlet berries. Naden's implied criticism of religion as being 'Dead Sea fruits' (1881: 47) suggests something that seems so full of promise and yet in reality is nothing but illusion

and disappointment. The final part of the poem can be read as a reference to Darwinian struggles in the pursuit of knowledge:

> His path is overgrown, his brow caressed
> By blossoms, that he did not sow,
> And foliage, that he tended not.
>
> And what though once, in vain yet noble quest,
> With burning feet and eyeballs dim,
> He strove to scale volcanic heights of power?
> Since on the fertile terrace grew for him
> Wisdom and Love, rich fruit and glorious flower. (1881: 47)

Naden's quest for knowledge manifests itself further in 'Lament of the Cork Cell' where science and nature are combined in a poem about the short life of a cell that Naden summarises in a footnote:

> Towards the end of summer, the cells immediately beneath the epidermis of a young shoot usually become converted into cork. Their green colour is changed to brown, and the walls are rendered almost impervious to water, so that the vital functions are no longer possible. (1881: 98)

Given that the poem is essentially about death, there is an optimistic ambience, created by the ten four line ABAB stanzas in an iambic pentameter, that understates the final demise of the individual cell. This is obvious in the second stanza where the early season fecundity and profusion is contrasted with the brevity of life:

> They tell me I have helped the trunk to grow,
> The roots to suck the earth, the boughs to fork,
> The fruits to ripen--well, it may be so,
> But I am dying, and shall soon be cork. (1881: 98)

The poem is replete with scientific terminology but the lightness of tone never disengages the reader and makes the subject palatable. Naden achieves this through the nonchalant anthropomorphism in the second half of the poem. Here the cell has experienced a youthful life of 'chemic yearnings' (1881: 99) expelling gases and rejoicing in living and growing. Included around the halfway point of the poem, there is even an amusing reference to utilitarianism in the plant kingdom:

Oh, had I sunk to inorganic slumber,
And left the atoms to their gaseous glee!
The greatest pleasure of the greatest number
My life may serve--but what is that to me? (1881: 99)

Although the utilitarian moral question posed at the end of the stanza above remains unanswered, there is no evidence of teleology or design, but instead the short-lived joys of Darwinism and abundant chaos. Naden weaves in the Spencerian view that whilst utilitarianism is important to the individual, the cork cell wearily seems resigned to the fact that it is the greater good (in Spencer, this is society) that must come first. The self-sustaining natural world shows a complete absence of religion and, with the ever-present shadow of death, it is certainly not a paradise nor a Garden of Eden. The final two stanzas display a distinct lack of emotion and instead there is just a calm acceptance of the natural order:

A cell amoeboid, drifting from its mother,
Naked and houseless in the cruel storm,
Having no aid of sister or of brother,
Nor any cellulose to keep it warm;

Yet having freedom! Nay, the dream I banish,
The time of cell-division long is past;
Slowly and surely, all my contents vanish,
My walls are waterproof–I'm cork at last! (1881: 100)

There is no fear at the end, even in the face of the uncaring nature of the penultimate stanza, and the knowledge gained from an empathy with the natural world; its attitude to death is Darwinian and somehow reassuring.

The pursuit of knowledge through the poem ‘Books’, that are described as nature’s fruits, seemingly requires one to give up youth, happiness and outdoor pursuits. The first sixteen lines of the poem seem ironic because the ‘fatal fruits’ cause anxiety in their inspiration to pursue knowledge, a meaning to life, which is surely unobtainable. Again, there is a Darwinian struggle to attain knowledge in the face of its vastness and a questioning of how that can ever be achieved:

Giving instead a weary questioning,
A striving for what cannot be attained,
A cloudy vision of the inner life. (1881: 48)

In requiring us to give up our carefree proclivities, Naden offers a comparison with the story of Adam and Eve and the taking of the apple from the tree of knowledge, rather than remaining content in their paradise. In nature, grief and joy are opposites and yet close companions; the second part of the poem attempts to resolve the conflict in that to commune with nature is an ideal state and to communicate this through poetry is inspiring – but that too much of a good thing makes us weary. The confident assertion of the poem's finale is that the Darwinian pursuit of knowledge and the aspiration to achieve through that pursuit is the greater goal:

I missed the truth
That knowledge is a greater thing than mirth.
And aspiration more than happiness. (1881: 49)

Again, Naden weaves into the narrative a utilitarian, Spencerian view that, whilst individual knowledge is a noble pursuit, we must aspire to evolve further through society as a sum of individual parts.

The pursuit of knowledge leads, inevitably, to speculation about God. Two poems consider the notion of religious doubt and although the significance of the date 'January 28th 1880' is not known, Naden had by this time begun her scientific training. The poem displays an awe of nature which Naden turns into images of trees forming a church-like structure. The natural world is re-imagined as man-made structures and yet the whole scene is still and silent. For Naden's religious scepticism the silence of the natural world in winter, mirrored in the silence of a church, reflects the fact that God too is silent:

Through this all-glorious temple of the trees,
As through the house of God, I walk alone;
A silence, as of worship, is their speech. (1881: 58)

The absence of God is also implied in ‘Yearning’, a short three quatrain poem that mournfully notices the emptiness of the silent night. The palpable pain in such a short poem reinforces the message one should be strong and that there is little point weeping. ‘The joys I cannot gain,’ (1881: 66) are the elusive sources of knowledge that she seeks child-like, in vain, be they religious or scientific. Knowledge and its pursuit, however, through science are grounded not in the supernatural but in the natural world.

A group of five poems deal with the natural world in various guises. ‘Springtide’ is about abundance and noise as the world awakes in a glorious cacophony of sound and the lonely stillness of winter has gone:

> THE silver birch, with pure-green flickering leaves,
> Flooded by morn with golden light, rejoices,
> And mingles with the kindred merriment
> Of perfume-laden winds and happy voices: (1881: 59)

The intertwining of the human and nature as rebirth takes place all around in teeming fecundity leaves little time for quiet reflection. Nature has brought forth life and although Naden writes: ‘With boundless hope all earth and heaven fills;’ (1881: 59) God is not only silent but this time, in the face of nature and all its glories, he is absent.

God is also absent in the next poem ‘Noonday’ as summer has arrived and, like the intertwining of nature and the human in ‘Springtide’, everything comes together in a fusion of nature and the human:

> Like half-articulate, melodious speech,
> The thousand murmurs of the noonday came. (1881: 61)

Naden describes it as ‘a poet’s paradise of rest,’ (1881: 61) a time in nature for nurture where our minds and bodies can be nourished to reap the ripening grain later in the season. The hard work comes later when the grain must be harvested and our minds and bodies must achieve their aims through toil and effort. There is no evidence of divine inspiration

here but a sense that the human soul can continue to develop in ways that science has yet to determine or to explain:

> To each grand thought, some beauteous form replies;
> The soul, exalted to its noblest height,
> Grows like the pure, illimitable skies,
> The chosen home of Mystery and Light. (1881: 62)

'Twilight' is a time for reflection and musing and conversely this is 'When poets' fancies tender buds unfold' (1881: 63). This seemingly gentle poem is one of Naden's first truly agnostic verses. She considers the poet's muse in the first six stanzas, as the colours of the day fade away, giving way to the mysteries of the night. This allows time for reflection which, conversely, is a productive time for the poet who can display gifts that the ordinary mind does not. Yet, a poet who can produce verse describing the trivial or the mundane can struggle to reach deep within the mind and to produce truly profound work. Such a poet's mind can absorb and express the 'restless billows of the ocean,' (1881: 64) that are obvious but not the dark depths of 'silence and eternal sleep' (1881: 64). In stanzas seven and eight despite humankind's ability for conviviality and waging war and the poets' seeming profundity, 'The earth's great secret lies for evermore' (1881: 64). In stanzas nine and ten, Naden turns back to astronomy to seek out answers to this great secret but nothing can be found. Perhaps the mysteries are too profound for us to comprehend and Naden appears to be expressing agnostic beliefs, rather than invoking God, who has increasingly begun to fade from her poetry:

> And far beyond the realms of starlight glory
> Are mysteries too high for Fancy's wing,
> Nameless alike in science and in story,
> In all that sage can tell or poet sing. (1881: 65)

It is beyond the human mind to understand the scale of the universe and no-one has experienced heaven and hell. Consequently, all we have are symbols and dreams.

Ultimately, we can never know until our death and by then our ability to express that to our fellow-man will have passed:

> For there are griefs, that none has ever spoken,
> Joys, that no mortal tongue has power to tell;
> The silence of the soul must be unbroken
> Till to the speech of earth we bid farewell. (1881: 65)

The final two poems in this section are precursors for the next section about sexual selection. 'The Wife's Song' contrasts a wife's passionate night-time longing for her absent husband, with a daytime love of nature. The passion of the wife is clearly grounded in the natural world despite a longing to find a way to escape its bonds. In 'A Letter' an old love letter reveals its secrets many years after it was written and presumably, given that it has browned with age, after the deaths of the people it concerned. The refrain of the poem is one of pain or a desire for rest from that pain. The letter contains a passionate declaration of love by the female writer. She regrets that she cannot offer religious solace like an ancient seer who could, perhaps, have claimed to have a special role in communing with religious deities or gods. Both 'The Wife's Song' and 'A Letter' are tinged with sadness through absence, loss or death and both offer the potential for religion to transcend such emotional states. Both women, though, are grounded in the eroticism and passion of earthly desires. What is glimpsed in both poems is a desire to seek answers within the natural world whilst recognising that there might be a higher authority. Ultimately, whether one could ever reach that level of understanding or whether one retreated to Spencer's 'Unknowable' or Huxley's agnosticism would become a matter for Naden's philosophical beliefs that I analyse in Chapter Three.

Naden is searching for something deeper and more uplifting to ensure society progresses. In the whimsical 'Free Thought in the Laboratory' she lampoons rather than embraces agnosticism as she seemed to be doing in 'Twilight'. The confidence of the opening stanzas, as the Mason College Chemistry Society meeting convenes, is abruptly

undermined by a Chemistry Demonstrator, whose molecular theories are so impenetrable as to render them as unpalatable as 'Agnosticism':

> As one who stands, at night, alone,
> Beside some dread abysm,
> He broached, in sad sepulchral tone,
> A blank Agnosticism. (C.C.W.N.1885a: 83-4)

Typical of her work in this period Naden juxtaposes science and religion by matching the certainty of science, even a certainty in the unknowable, with an equal certainty in religion, to the point at which everything becomes a confusion:

> "Ye happy days! while yet at school
> With simple faith I studied,
> And deemed each complex molecule,
> Sure as the 'rod that budded.'
>
> Not thus I speak to first year's men,
> But, like a righteous cleric,
> Keep for initiates–nine or ten–
> All doctrines esoteric."
>
> He ceased; I sadly mused, "How blest,
> Oh Faith! is he who hath you!"
> I thought of Renan and the rest,
> Of Strauss and Arnold (Matthew).
>
> Ah, Demonstrator good! *Et tu*,
> My chemic faith to shatter!
> "There's nothing new, there's nothing true,"
> I *hope* it "doesn't matter!" (C.C.W.N.1885a: 83-4)

The allusion to Aaron's rod, the references to Renan and Strauss, who were criticised for suggesting that Jesus was mortal, and the comedic rhyme for 'Arnold (Matthew)', who rejected Christianity in favour of agnosticism, all add to a sense of mock confusion about religion and science. Given the student audience for this poem, however, Naden appears to be enjoying the contrary positions that the poem mocks. This is a technique she explores to comic effect in her 'Evolutional Erotics' poems on sexual selection that I analyse in Chapter Two and which is the subject of the next section.

Sexual Selection

In this section I examine a range of Naden's early published poems to understand her attitudes towards sexual selection, one of the key subjects in Darwin's *The Descent of Man,* published when Naden was thirteen. Darwin made clear the weakness of his position in the *Descent* by acknowledging that: 'The views here advanced, on the part which sexual selection has played in the history of man, want scientific precision' (1871 Vol II: 383). Furthermore, given that Darwin concedes that: 'Many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative, and some no doubt will prove erroneous;' (1871 Vol II: 385) it is unsurprising that, as I shall illustrate, Naden with her scientific mind, desire for facts and strict adherence to first principles, should question Darwin's hypothesis in the sardonic way that she often does. Furthermore, I shall scrutinise Naden's attitudes as a young woman in engaging in this sexual dynamic and the extent to which she was comfortable with Darwin's theory. As Gillian Beer observes of the character of Gwendolen in *Daniel Deronda*, this was an issue for many young women of this time: 'George Eliot's febrile individualistic Gwendolen, with her distaste for sexual wooing, her dread of entering the world of descent, is expressive of many disturbances entering thought in the 1870s' (2000: 198). In this section, I will explore whether Naden supports the principles of sexual selection or is disturbed by it, in the way that Beer describes above; or whether, by often seeming to mock it, she challenges Darwin's nascent theory.

Throughout the 1870s/1880s writers such as Naden sought to understand the juxtaposition of Darwin's seemingly random, uncaring natural selection and the nature of sexual selection. The *Descent* is unequivocal in affording primacy to men in terms of sexual selection. Broadly, this is a reversal of the animal kingdom, where females tend to be preeminent in choosing a partner, usually typified in one of two ways. Firstly, by male versus male competition with the most potent succeeding in either killing or driving away

any competition for the females, who remain largely passive until they make their choice. Secondly, selection based on the lure between opposite members of a species who attempt to attract each other, typically through displays or courtship, where the female will usually select the male with the most attractive characteristics. It was this second category that seemed to writers of Naden's time most relevant to human sexual selection. Even by the patriarchal standards of the late Victorian era, Darwin's comments about the nature of such sexual selection seem to belong to an earlier period, as when he observes: 'Civilised men are largely attracted by the mental charms of women, by their wealth, and especially by their social position;' (1871 Vol II: 355-6). In other words, sexual selection operates to the extent that, in this era, men do not marry beneath themselves. Men are, however, significantly motivated by beauty which can sometimes act to disrupt the dynamic. The *Descent* afforded women some degree of freedom of choice but this was usually within the social boundaries outlined above. The debate about the respective importance of wealth and social status, when set against physical attractiveness, provided Naden with a rich vein of material. She was an heiress to a fortune and one of the most educated women of her generation. This reversed the gender dynamic, in her case, but not in the eyes of the law. Her awareness of this fact is the source of much of her seeming ambivalence towards the subject. As I shall illustrate, Naden seems particularly interested in the notion that it was usually considered the preserve of the Victorian male to attempt to influence the passive female to agree or decline. The act of selecting or rejecting a partner, however, renders the female active and, ostensibly, she sheds any notions of passivity, although the true extent of her choice continued to be debated. Darwin, however, was unequivocal when he asserts:

> Sexual selection depends on the success of certain individuals over others of the same sex in relation to the propagation of the species; whilst natural selection depends on the success of both sexes, at all ages, in relation to the general conditions of life. (1871 Vol II: 398)

The female in exercising her choice is imprinting the next generation with an evolutionary stamp of superior traits relative to the remaining non-selected males. John Durrant recognises such characteristics in his pragmatic exposition of this trait:

> Darwin applied the theory of male contact to those species in which the male was larger and more aggressive than the female, or in which he possessed distinctive armor [sic] or weaponry; and he invoked the theory of female choice wherever the male was distinguished by color, ornamentation, or song. (2014: 297)

Sexual selection, therefore, represents a key bond between the sexes but also a link to the past; by the time Naden was an adult, the role of God in such selections seemed irrelevant. Durrant observes this phenomenon of Darwinism being influential in the gentle removal of God from the picture:

> Just as the idea of God as cosmic craftsman had been replaced in the *Origin* by the selecting power of nature, so the idea of God as cosmic artist was replaced in the *Descent* by the selecting power of animals. (2014: 298)

Durrant's observation does not delineate the many variables of the selecting power in humans, such as the rise of the independent and educated woman. For such women, however, the lack of opportunities to compete with men in the workplace were exacerbated by the primacy afforded by the patriarchy to attributes such as attractiveness and the potential for child-bearing; Beer expands on this view:

> The role of women both as vessels of continuity–bearing children, handing on the inheritance of the race–and as representing what men in a specific culture most desire, was foregrounded by Darwin's new emphasis on sexual selection. Because women must accommodate themselves to men's values if they are to be selected in the marriage market and achieve their expected status as wives and mothers, the bearers of the dominant culture, women represent a critique of that culture. (2000: 205)

Naden certainly critiques the culture that Beer alludes to above, as I shall illustrate. She appears to be at times ambivalent and often pessimistic about the chances that women, including herself, could exert control over sexual selection through education. Naden did not, however, see her supposed genetic role as preventing her from succeeding in her

chosen field. Certainly, she would not have shared Darwin's view that women are like a less developed race – behind man (or European man, as Darwin saw it).

Naden's first published poem is 'The Lady Doctor' in *London Society.*[7] Subtitled *Light and Amusing Literature for the Hours of Relaxation,* the magazine published highly popular women writers of the time such as Florence Marryat and Charlotte Riddell. Launched in 1862 by James Hogg and priced at 1 shilling, at its zenith in the mid to late-1860s the magazine had a circulation of 20,000. This compares to the preeminent illustrated magazine of this era, *The Cornhill Magazine*, that achieved 110,000 for its first publication (Cox 1996).[8] This independent illustrated monthly magazine offered poetry, serial fiction but also, as Brake and Demoor explain, 'short articles and stories covering a wide range of themes (holidays and travel, the arts and the pursuits of high society: hunting, balls, dinner parties, the marriage market and London Life)' (2009: 277). The success did not last and Richard Altick argues that the public 'wanted shilling magazines, but they also wanted more fiction and a lighter literary tone than the *Cornhill* gave them' (1957: 359). It was this space in the market that several different editors of *London Society* (including, between 1872-1876, Florence Marryat) attempted to address.[9]

Naden's poem offers a critique of sexual selection through its deadpan portrayal of isolation and detachment as a female doctor rejects love in favour of her career. Ostensibly, the doctor's stark choice, which she has made with some regrets, mirrors Naden's own fears about her future choices of whether to become the wife and property of a man or to pursue an academic career. As a young heiress before the *Married Women's Property Act*[10] Naden's choices posed a dilemma. As it was, Naden became one of the best educated

[7] Note that throughout the thesis I cite the 'The Lady Doctor' from *Songs and Sonnets* rather than 'The Lady-Doctor' that was originally published in *London Society*, Volume XXXI, No. CLXXXI, pp81-82.
[8] See The John Murray Archive - http://digital.nls.uk/jma/topics/publishing/cornhill.html.
[9] Whether Marryat commissioned Naden's poem is not known because she left the editorship shortly before 'The Lady Doctor' was published.
[10] The Act became law in 1882 giving married women the same rights to their property as unmarried women.

women of her generation and undoubtedly sympathised with the protracted struggles of women to become doctors in the face of sustained opposition from men.[11] Many of *London Society*'s significant male readership would not have supported women's attempts to become doctors. The poem's narrative voice sounds witty and male, as if Naden is addressing this male audience in their own register, anticipating their *schadenfreude* at the fate of 'The Lady Doctor'.[12] But it is Naden's own discomfort at the notion of sexual selection that can be glimpsed in the opening stanza:

> SAW ye that spinster gaunt and grey,
> Whose aspect stern might well dismay
> A bombadier stout-hearted?
> The golden hair, the blooming face,
> And all a maiden's tender grace
> Long, long from her have parted. (1881: 81)

The apparent seriousness of the doctor becomes sardonic, despite the loquaciousness of the narrative. Naden uses a lightness of tone and double rhyme, to convey a language which, stereotypically, might have been associated negatively with feminine discourse. The use of humour is complex in that she appears to be ventriloquising a misogynistic form of masculine discourse whilst denying herself the sentimental register expected of women writers. This adoption of masculine wit is a distancing technique designed to both engage with her audience and to unsettle them too. This approach also informs Naden's deployment of a rather sinister inference concerning the spinster's elderly appearance as somehow negatively affecting a young soldier. The fact that her natural ageing and serious mien is worthy of such comment and comparison with her youthful beauty is unsettling. Naden's juxtaposition of old age and youth seems to reinforce the view in the *Descent* that

[11] Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was an example of what could be achieved, although the road was long and treacherous. She opened a private practice in 1865, married in 1871, and had three children, so 'The Lady Doctor*'* which was published in 1877 is clearly not a direct reference to her.
[12] The most likely candidate, if the poem was indeed inspired by a single real-life example, is Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910), who became the first female doctor in America in 1849; she would have been around fifty-six at the time of the poem's publication and she never married.

the ageing process inevitably must reduce one's ability to be sexually selected. The second verse is interesting because here we learn more about the doctor herself:

> A Doctor she–her sole delight
> To order draughts as black as night,
> Powders, and pills, and lotions;
> Her very glance might cast a spell
> Transmuting Sherry and Moselle
> To chill and acrid potions. (1881: 81)

The sternness of the old doctor in the first three lines is coupled to the humour of the final three lines through a unifying AABCCB rhyme scheme. Naden's use of 'Transmuting' (1881: 81) is illuminating: it is an old alchemy term made popular by Lamarck, who wrote of the transmutation of the species. This single word hints at the doctor being, like Naden, a scientist and an evolutionist. Sexual selection continues to unsettle in the third stanza, however, with the doctor as a young and desirable seventeen-year-old with a 'rash' and 'presumptuous' lover. The choice of subject matter, published one year after her first meeting with Dr. Lewins and the memories of the lovers meeting at the age of seventeen are striking. It is possible that Naden has conflated the idea of the lady doctor with the elderly bachelor Lewins. This view conforms with Naden occasionally engaging in playful humour when dealing with serious subjects.

Lewins's medical influence seems to be evident in the fourth stanza with a list of patent medicines that the doctor amusingly does not dispense to her lover, instead relying on blushing looks, her sweet smile and kisses. We know that Naden later studied chemistry and botany but stanza four mentions Jesuit's Bark (from which quinine was derived), ipecacuanha (a plant often used as an emetic for emptying a stomach in case of poisoning), chlorodyne (originally used to treat cholera) and camomile (used to help with sleep); all clearly displaying a knowledge of botany at which she was later to excel.

The pivotal stanza five reveals that for most of her life the doctor has been alone and that she has now grown cold and detached. This is a recurring theme in Naden's early

poetry, as we saw in poems such as ‘The Astronomer’, ‘The Carmelite Nun’ and ‘The Last Druid’. The stanza is interesting, though, because this is not a rational decision but one based on extreme emotions:

> In anger, scorn, caprice or pride,
> She left her old companion’s side
> To be a Lady Doctor. (1881: 82)

The notion of sexual selection in the 1870s was especially problematic for the patriarchy when it came to female choice. Darwin’s contemporaries did not like the idea that females consciously exercised choice and there was a generally accepted view that women were not as capable as men at exercising good judgement. Also, aspects such as ageing are problematical for Darwinian sexual selection and Naden is also interested in the consequences of a woman who does exercise choice rationally. The doctor’s pursuit of her career seems to be bleak and yet she is still young and beautiful and does experience pleasure when she achieves her dream of becoming a successful doctor. In the final stanzas, however, the aging doctor no longer smiles and her beauty has faded. Naden cannot resist a gentle and playful mocking of the fact that although she has succeeded, she has aged and she is alone. However, she implies that this happens to men too. The doctor attempted to choose carefully in contrast to the men, a young soldier and her lover, who are both ardent and passionate and, by inference, potentially promiscuous in a Darwinian sense. The humour is sardonic:

> No gentle sympathy she shows,
> She seems a man in woman’s clothes,
> All female graces slighting. (1881: 84)

Naden was in her teens when she composed the poem and throughout it she appears to be trying to work out what a young woman should do when faced with the dilemma of the pursuit of a career or love. The doctor exercises a conscious and reasoned decision, a

uniquely human trait in the animal kingdom, but in the penultimate stanza seems to regret the choice that she made:

> Yet blame her not, for she has known
> The woe of living all alone,
> In friendless, dreary sadness;
> She longs for what she once disdained,
> And sighs to think she might have gained
> A home of love and gladness. (1881: 84)

And yet, the poem's final stanza 'Moral' appears to be equivocal about the choice women should make. It seems to posit that whether one chooses the path of learning or love then one must pursue this single-mindedly. Naden was about to begin an academic career with great discipline and distinction. There were no known romances in her short life and although the 'The Lady Doctor' is not an autobiographical poem, the parallels with Naden's early engagement with academia are striking. The 'Moral' is ambiguous and the tension in the poem, concerning the choice made in rejecting love in favour of a medical career, which seems to then be regretted, is unresolved. Naden appears to say that, whatever choices one makes, the key is to pursue them with great dedication. The doctor does this, of course, so perhaps she was not true to herself and, in her case, she should have chosen love and not a career. This ambivalence suggests that Naden had doubts whether there were answers to such a dilemma which she continues to explore in the next poem.

The question of reason concerning conscious choice in sexual selection and whether this is a purely feminine trait is explored in 'The Abbot'. The poem is in a similar vein to 'The Lady Doctor' but it appears the dead Abbot has nurtured a secret love all his life. Naden unsettles the reader once again with the Abbot's death portrayed as something to be dreaded: 'The fearful presence of the dead/Awed that stern brotherhood' (1881: 73) and in what seems like a moment of doubt they ask 'Where was the *spirit* now?' (1881: 73). One would normally expect that the Abbot's spirit would be in heaven given such a frugal and ascetic life. When undressing him, however, they are surprised to discover a lock of hair,

presumably from a lover of his youth. One of the brethren advises a return of the lock of hair to the Abbot because he is dead and should not be judged:

> "Blame not his long-enduring love,
> Nor call it weak and vain,
> But pray that he, in realms above,
> May meet his bride again." (1881: 75)

We do not know if the Abbott regretted his choice but the lack of religious ornamentation suggests that all was not well and that perhaps there was indeed an element of regret. The cloisters like the Abbot are 'grey and old' (1881: 75) and the whole mood of the poem does tend to suggest the tiredness of religion and consequently of the poor choices it expects its adherents to make. Both 'The Lady Doctor' and 'The Abbot' complicate and critique the theory of sexual selection because in both cases the protagonists' sexual desires have been consciously repressed. This repression in both cases leads to unhappiness, regret and isolation.

Naden continues to deride the notion of sexual selection and the complexity of the choices available in 'Love versus Learning'. A young woman dreams of marrying a philosopher, a poet or an inventor (someone who would appreciate her looks and her mind) and yet becomes trapped in a relationship with a dry Oxford academic. He has become bored by the pursuit of knowledge but sees no reason for her to indulge in such matters, especially as she is a woman. Naden seems to be recalling this passage from the *Descent*:

> for without the higher powers of the imagination and reason, no eminent success in many subjects can be gained. But these latter as well as the former faculties will have been developed in man, partly through sexual selection,–that is, through the contest of rival males, and partly through natural selection…Thus, man has ultimately become superior to woman. (1871 Vol II: 328)

From what we know of Naden it is inconceivable that she would have accepted this casual but culturally embedded Darwinian misogyny and poetry was an ideal vehicle to express her views, especially through humour. The poem appears to reflect semi-autobiographical

musings of a young Naden imagining an ideal union of herself and a learned but loving man: ‘No elderly, spectacled Mentor/But one who would worship and woo;’ (1881: 88). Although published ten years earlier the ‘Finale’ of *Middlemarch*, with Dorothea’s acceptance of Will Ladislaw’s career as a politician, and the resulting ending of her own promising trajectory, does seem to find resonances in Naden’s poem. Dorothea was still destined to achieve much but ‘Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth’ (Eliot 1988: 896). This also recalls Naden’s poem ‘The Pantheist’s Song of Immortality’ and Naden’s metaphor of how the action of water on the sand reflects uncredited but worthy human activity. Naden’s female characters, like Eliot’s Dorothea, often display the trajectory of rebellion followed by compromise and it is a theme that she recounts frequently. In ‘Love versus Learning’ the humorous tone, lightness of metre and double rhyme scheme lends Naden’s characters a sense of frivolity. Whilst neither character is unlikeable, their levity with each other and concerning their academic talents is at odds with their achievements. The male academic has reached a position of security but the vitality of youth has dissipated (although not his ardour for his lover) and there is a sense of Naden mocking both characters. Her humour is not directed at their love, which seems genuine and real. Naden attacks both the way that the man treats his academic gifts so lightly and the woman’s passivity in accepting his casual misogyny; this is potentially destructive for them both:

> His levity's truly terrific,
> And often I think we must part,
> But compliments so scientific
> Recapture my fluttering heart.
>
> Yet sometimes 'tis very confusing,
> This conflict of love and of lore–
> But hark! I must cease from my musing,
> For that is his knock at the door! (1881: 90)

Women may have been inferior in Darwin's eyes but for the woman in this poem the physical nature of their relationship is enjoyable and, finally, she is almost resolved to give up her learning to please her partner. This is a subversion of the theme in 'The Lady Doctor' but, in this case, sexual selection has been successful to the extent that love and physical attraction are evident and the academic achievements are relegated to a position of inferiority relative to the sexual side of their relationship.

In the pursuit of women by men Naden was concerned to understand how far deceit could play a role in the man securing a successful acceptance by a woman. In 'The Old Love Letters', a duplicitous lover discovers a box of his returned love letters from ten years ago when, at the age of eighteen, he had a passionate liaison. He reveals that he is now courting an heiress, feigning a lack of interest in her pecuniary means, and seemingly he has no problem in re-using his youthful and ardent love letters. Perhaps this poem is Naden's take on the Darwinian notion of civilised men being mainly attracted by wealth and social position. The nature of such physical attraction and its potential shallowness is explored in 'The Two Artists'. A pretentious and overweening painter determines to find the exact colour combinations to match the complexion of a cousin who is the object of his affection. His sister hears his pronouncements and advises that his search need go no further than a bottle of cosmetics in her bedroom. This revelation is enough to upset the precious artist and ensures that he never attempts to woo the girl again, or indeed any girl, for the foreseeable future. Naden's ridiculous and comic situation shows her challenging the extent of the effort expounded by the female in enhancing her appearance through whatever means necessary to attract the male. The male artist's sensibilities are offended by the cousin's use of accoutrements to enhance her appearance and, one assumes, to appear more attractive to men. Naden seems to be recalling this passage from the *Descent*: 'Women are everywhere conscious of the value of their beauty; and when they have the

means, they take more delight in decorating themselves with all sorts of ornaments than do men' (1871 Vol II: 371-2). Darwin argued that civilised men were clearly influenced in their selection of a wife by physical appearance and Naden appears to want to ridicule this notion, however accurate it may be, by attacking both sexes for the artifice that it produces.

Having challenged sexual selection by ridiculing male pretensions in 'The Two Artists' Naden does the same to a female in 'Maiden Meditation'. She uses the archaic term 'maiden' (an unmarried woman) who mistakenly believes that wearing her best Sunday gown, whilst sewing by the window, will catch the attention of a youth she finds appealing. Naden ridicules the young woman's pretensions by having her misread every signal from the youth; for example, she believes his whistling is directed at her because of her love of music and that his lily button-hole is because her name is Lily. The nature of sexual selection can be very fickle, however, and the scales quickly drop from the young woman's eyes. She sees him with a blonde girl wearing a scarlet shawl and it appears that he was simply going to meet someone else. Suddenly the ardour cools and she realises that he is no longer desirable. In the future, she resolves to wait for suitors to come to her rather than try to impress them first. It is her passivity and misreading of the situation rather than any kind of deliberate attempt at deceit from the male that has caused the comic situation. There never was any real contact between them, merely what was imagined by the woman, combined with some mild flirting from the male; Darwin remarks: 'The exertion of some choice on the part of the female seems almost as general a law as the eagerness of the male' (1871 Vol I: 273). In this case the successful female could have been exercising her own sexual choice. It could simply have been that the male had exerted his right to choose the most appropriate and perhaps more attractive partner. Naden experiments with the complexity of sexual selection with the successful female who, albeit passively, appears to be in control of the potential seduction. She then reverses the notion of choice with the

male seemingly exercising the power of sexual selection. The poem leaves unresolved the fact that it could indeed have been the second female exercising her own choice in selecting the male. The conclusion describes the unsuccessful young woman resolving to not be so passive in the future and perhaps being more selective in her choice. This is what we might expect from Naden although it could be her playing with the Darwinian notion that 'In utterly barbarous tribes the women have more power in choosing, rejecting, and tempting their lovers, or of afterwards changing their husbands, than might have been expected' (1871 Vol II: 372).

Several poems have dealt with the notion of unfulfilled youthful love but 'Changed' considers what happens when one meets a former lover much later in life. It is, ostensibly, a light poem about lost love but it is told from the vantage point of an older man who comes to realise that the love has died. A close reading of the poem however suggests more complex forces are at play:

> THEY told me she was still the same,
> In form, and mind, and heart;
> With freshly-dawning joy I came,
> And now in grief depart. (1881: 67)

As the poem progresses, the male speaker is disappointed with his former lover's increasing maturity; this distances her from the objectified love object that she had been to him. When she was much younger, he clearly saw only her beauty, rather than any other qualities she may have possessed. We only learn about the young woman through the male narrator, but it appears that her rejection of his desire for her subservience lies at the heart of the poem:

> More measured is the silver voice,
> The words more fitly said;
> But while she speaks, I half rejoice
> To feel my love is dead. (1881: 67)

Although the woman has lost her youth she is still physically attractive and yet the rather disturbing ending suggests a patriarchal desire to own the younger version of the woman. This is another example of Naden imagining the dynamic of a relationship between an older man and a younger woman. Here we glimpse the pain and loneliness of isolation in a relationship in which a patriarchal objectification of womanhood is at odds with a woman who is determined either simply to assert herself or even to make her independent way in the world.

Despite Naden's often witty engagement with the subject of sexual selection, in none of these seven poems are the principal characters happy with the choices they have made. Perhaps Naden is railing against the theory of sexual selection, very familiar to her as a scientist, but not a widely-accepted hypothesis during her lifetime. Darwin's casual misogyny would have been anathema to Naden but it is possible that she is working out her own perspectives without necessarily rejecting sexual selection's fundamental principles. Although Naden's principal characters are largely unhappy, it is imaginable that the choices for the secondary characters have, sometimes, turned out well. The adoption of plumage through the wearing of a pretty dress does not work for the principal character of 'Maiden Meditation' and yet it does appear to work for the blonde secondary character of the poem. Interestingly, the plumage worn in the form of make-up in 'The Two Artists' is seen by the male as somehow deceitful, on the part of the woman, who appears to have done this in all innocence simply to attract and not to deceive. The poems depict choices for women that are complicated by careers, love rivals, money, education and love that has died. Of importance for Naden are the fates of those female characters who make the choice of a career or of an academic for a husband: these poems end unhappily for the female characters. The men face similar challenges to the women and yet it is the women who tend to fare the worst – the men deploy cunning or deceit, they accept the status quo

and, except for the preposterous artist of 'The Two Artists', they seem more easily able to exercise choice or indeed to move on once love has died. Naden presents a complex and unbalanced picture to reflect the position of the theory of sexual selection at this point in post-Darwinian society. Her vigorous and imaginative exploration of changing society requires her to adopt a range of voices that suggests she is working out her own thoughts, on a complex subject, through the deployment of distancing techniques, such as a comic register when required. She has some fun with the subject but this does not mask the seriousness underlying her poetry. She undeniably sees that beauty has a purpose in the role of sexual selection and to an evolutionist the beauty of nature has a purpose too and it is to that which I now turn.

Sonnets

Naden included thirty-five sonnets in *Songs and Sonnets* and they provide a unique insight into her thinking during this time. The compact nature of the sonnet form often serves to heighten the emotions and in her own sonnet sequence Naden conveys emotional states that seem to vary by the season. They are imbued with reflections of an annual cycle of nature (starting in 1879) from which God is largely absent. The popularity of the genre was such that Joseph Phelan argues that: 'The years around 1880 saw a 'Sonnettomania' to rival that of the closing decades of the previous century' (2005: 134). Naden was clearly part of the tradition that Phelan identified but she goes further in her embracing of the genre. William Going (1976: 17) analysed a representative sample of sonnet sequences for the years 1831-1900. He found that 'Nature & Place' had replaced in popularity the traditional amatory and religious subjects of the period 1781-1830. Marianne Remoortel is also helpful in contextualising Naden's sonnet sequence when she argues that:

> it had become a complex genre with mixed-gender affiliations, fit for ambitious male and female poets, modest poetesses and occasional versifiers, a genre that was fraught with masculine metaphors of power and control whilst simultaneously constituting a feminized space of sensibility and private utterance. (2011: 89)

It is into this context of the popularity of the sonnet sequence, juxtaposed with nature as a common subject, that Naden's reflective sonnets substitute the traditional amatory content, with a love for and a communing with the natural world. James Moore has suggested that, as a young woman who never knew her mother, Naden sees in nature the possibility of a union with a dead loved one; in a Hylo-Idealistic sense this represents a connection of materialism and idealism in a oneness with the woman who had given Naden life and lost her own in the process. Moore argues that the relationship with nature should be seen in deeply sensual terms and that for Naden this is an intimacy that is purely feminine: 'What mattered to her more was an experience of wholeness, an erotic union of self and nature, that no man could effect' (1987: 247). I think that Moore rather overstates his case and that it is more accurate to say that Naden simply subverts the traditional uses of the Petrarchan sonnet by using Mother Nature as the object of her affection.

In her nature sonnets Naden explores consciousness in relation to the natural world and this is a departure from the Darwinism that is a feature of her poetry so far. Her belief in a harmony with nature reveals her interest in how our senses are interpreted by our consciousness and the emotional states that this engenders. Given that she believes that everything is subject to the laws of nature, her sonnets are permeated by a desire to understand plants and animals and how they seek an equilibrium with the natural world. Everything in turn is subject to the laws of the cosmos. This is Spenserian in its ethos that such a unity means the formation of a bond between plants and animals and the environment. To achieve this, external adjustments with the environment must be consistent with the internal equilibrium of the plant or animal; in humans, this is our consciousness. As Spencer asserts: 'Life is definable as the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations. And when we so define it, we discover that the physical and the psychical life are equally comprehended by the definition' (Spencer 1900:

68). The centrality of this notion in Spencer's *First Principles* means that it is likely that this was a major influence on Naden's sonnet writing at the time. Like Spencer, she sees nature as a higher force and this is a dominant feature of the sonnets.

Given that Naden presented the sonnets as part of a natural annual cycle, I have analysed them sequentially to draw out the evolutionary narratives contained within them. These narratives foreground the regenerative power of the earth as self-sustaining. Naden begins with 'January, 1879'. This is a time for the natural world to rest and to regenerate and this is, for humans, often a time of reflection. It was also a year when Naden's world was changing as the stability of her childhood and adolescence began to give way to adulthood. She was twenty-one years old and it was also the year she began her science training. So, it is unsurprising that the sonnet attempts to reconcile several opposing emotional states. The exuberant enthusiasm of the beginning of the octet is undermined by winter's ability, even at rest, to cause harm. Winter will eventually be defeated by the spring, though, if one has the strength to endure. So, despite depicting winter as an enemy, her enthusiastic love of spring acts as her defence against it:

> WITH bounding heart, with eyes and cheeks aglow.
> Not caring how the frost may stab and sting,
> I haste along, where leafless branches fling
> Their clear blue shadows o'er the sun-lit snow.
> For though I count sad Winter as my foe,
> Within my heart I can create the Spring,
> Can hear sweet music, ere the thrushes sing,
> And see white flowers, before the pear-buds blow.
>
> These homely scenes, whence first my childish eye
> Its own ideal form of beauty chose,
> I love for ever; leaves and blossoms die,
> But this ethereal image lingers yet;
> And if I grieved, I could but grieve for those
> Who know not Spring, or having known, forget. (1881: 109)

Naden's early love for nature was cultivated in her garden at Pakenham House, Birmingham, during her formative years (Fig. 2 shows part of the large garden in its neglected condition in 2015). Her intimate knowledge of nature is obvious, as she imagines the thrush whose song announces the approach of spring, as do the white flowers of the pear buds. The ambivalence of Naden's sadness in the final lines of the sestet is twofold. Firstly, it is perhaps a veiled reference to her late mother whose absence would have been most keenly felt at that time. Secondly, it could be read as a recognition that for those who knew the joys of spring but have died, in the absence of an afterlife, that joy has gone forever.

Fig. 2

'To a Hyacinth in January' is, ostensibly, an invocation to the Victorian passion for hyacinths and the message that they convey: 'White hyacinth – unobtrusive loveliness. Has its roots in Greek mythology and celebrates the quiet beauty and purity of love' (Royal Horticultural Society 2011). Traditionally, they were planted in the autumn outside to flower in the spring. The Victorians would often force them to flower indoors, however, in a vase of water to provide scented flowers in December/January. In the poem, Naden watches intently as the flowers emerge safe indoors away from winter's ravages. The sense of growth and development throughout the octet is emphasised by the enjambment at the final lines of the first and second quatrains. The sestet, though, reflects on the fact that

outside, during the vicissitudes of spring, the flowers are often damaged or destroyed, unlike the perfect plant that she has nurtured in the safe environment of Pakenham House. This feels like a mother and child relationship, such is the love that Naden gives the plant. The intimacy is underpinned by a tender awareness of the plant's anatomy, as Naden describes the white 'raceme',[13] referring to the clusters of flowers along a main stem. As in the previous sonnet, Naden desires the spring throughout the long winter months in states of sadness and loneliness. The hyacinth represents the beauty and love to come when the spring arrives but it is also suggestive of man's ability to potentially control nature, as Naden does, by growing the hyacinth indoors. It can also be read as a Spencerian recognition of living things displaying an ability to react to, and to modify themselves, in reaction to their surroundings.

In the Victorian language of flowers, snowdrops mean consolation or hope and, in 'To The First Snowdrop', like the hyacinth safe in Pakenham House, the snowdrop is safe underground waiting to emerge. The snowdrop is portrayed as a child and its appearance in bud suggests its birth from the safety of its mother, earth. The sestet creates the imagery of the snowdrops emerging into the spring as part of an orchestra of many instruments emotional in its range and intensity. Like an orchestra, all the elements of nature need to work together in a Spencerian harmony if they are to succeed. The sestet exudes Darwinian fecundity in the form of nature but, for now, the new snowdrops are as pure and chaste as the virgins tending to the sacred fire of Vesta in their temple in Rome:

> Now springs to life and light each buried joy,
> With broken music and with tearful glow,
> With drooping blossoms, winter-pale and coy;
> For Love shall soon fulfil her long desire–
> Her face and breast are memories of snow,
> Her heart, like thine, is lit with vestal fire. (1881: 111)

[13] Typically, Naden uses the correct botanical name rather than a poetic term.

Next, in the sequence, is a pair of sonnets ‘March, 1878’ and ‘March, 1879’. The inclusion of two March sonnets from different years makes it possible to scrutinise the progression or relationship between the two years. In ‘March, 1878’ the arrival of spring is tempestuous but joyous. The undercurrent is one of watching and waiting, with a sense of melancholy, in sombre remembrance of the winter days that have been endured. The conflicting emotional states of hope (signified by the almond blossom) and fear of the changeable weather, all serve to give the sonnet a sense of the vicissitudes of nature. The funereal element in the sestet adds to the general gloom but colour and light will soon follow and the upbeat ending reminds that spring is approaching:

> I, too, foresee her glory, and rejoice;
> Though to my heart she comes in wintry guise,
> Dark-robed, slow-stepping; for in eye and voice
> Are promises of music and of light,
> And I can wait till smiles shall come for sighs,
> And golden hues for grey, and bloom for blight. (1881: 112)

‘March, 1879’ presents a more quasi-religious feel, with a choir of birds chanting their love song rather than the solitary blackbird of the previous sonnet. This poem has a more confident tone, with the elements of fear and melancholy in the previous sonnet almost invisible:

> And ye, sweet heralds of the summer crowd
> Of unremembered flowers, whose tints combine
> To light the meadows–ye grow pale and pine,
> When by cold winds your radiant heads are bowed. (1881: 113)

Overall, the emotions conveyed (in the absence of any mention of God) are redolent of a pantheistic connection of the birds singing and the sun shining, meadows lit by the colours of the flowers and the emotional bearing that this has on the human observer.

The quasi-religious feel is continued in ‘April, 1879’, in which the octet describes a dream-like scene that appears to resemble the Garden of Eden. The passionate mood of the dream, however, is shown to be fleeting and not a permanent state; in fact, not a Garden of

Eden at all. The sestet returns us to the reality of the natural world and an awareness that this is not a religious epiphany, or divine inspiration, but a natural earth-born phenomenon. Continuing with the theme of emergence from the throes of winter, 'May, 1879' is a celebration of flowers that emerge into the springtime. In the octet, spring is requested to allow a festival, a celebration of birth, life and fecundity as the living things emerge above the death and detritus of winter. Naden's subtle attribution of anthropomorphic qualities to the emerging plants is achieved through the veiled language of flowers that portrays the hedgerow hawthorns (often used to symbolise hope), lily flowers (if white, symbolising virginity), buttercups (perhaps symbolic of cheerfulness) and cowslips (can be taken to symbolise youth) as the promise of early life. Again, nature appears as mother and the emerging plants as children who are innocent but will grow fast. The festival of life, therefore, is a celebration of nature and emerging life rather than God who is, once again, absent from the poem.

Two sonnets that recall a visit that Naden must have made to Shakespeare's birthplace are also a celebration of existing in the natural world. 'Stratford-On-Avon, May 14th, 1880' is ostensibly about a visit to the Holy Trinity Church where Shakespeare was both baptised and buried.[14] The celebration of the natural world that concludes the octet is balanced with a fleeting reference to God at the start of the sestet. The ending's glorious interplay of the natural world with the young Shakespeare, however, leaves no room or indeed, any need for God. The second sonnet of the visit is 'In The Lanes Between Stratford And Shottery, May 14th, 1880'. This poem is set near to Anne Hathaway's cottage at Shottery.[15] The sonnet's octet conjoins with its predecessor by imagining

[14] The respectful solemnity in the depiction of the church is overshadowed by Naden's observation that half of its fame rests upon the fact that Shakespeare is buried here. Consequently, the twelve lime trees supposedly representing the apostles contain not their essence but Shakespeare's. Naden was fond of lime trees and the garden at Pakenham House is known to have had them there during her lifetime.
[15] In Naden's time the cottage was not quite the tourist attraction that it is today as it was only acquired by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in 1892.

Shakespeare comingling with nature in a glorious celebration of late sixteenth century spring. The sestet touches on his courtship with Anne Hathaway and what is striking about the finale is that life dominates over his works. The immortality that Shakespeare achieves through his works is subservient to the mortal joys of love. Naden's implication is that we should live in the present because there is no afterlife with which to concern ourselves.

Naden portrays nature as a stimulating force for the mind with spring presaging the early warmth of the approaching summer in 'Sunshine'. The sunshine brings with it light, warmth and tranquillity as its victory over winter is completed calmly. 'In the Garden' represents a similar theme to 'Sunshine' with the first quatrain about wooing, love and reverence; it is suggestive of a love and desire for a communing with nature. In the second quatrain of the octet, Naden reflects on the ability of the senses to appreciate beauty. In the sestet, the flowers, so often the subject of poetry, are here anthropomorphised as poets and philosophers. Their lives are all too brief and ultimately it is elemental nature that remains triumphant energised into life from the sun.

Naden again displays her ardent desire for a kinship with nature, this time through the symbols of joy and friendship, in 'Yellow Roses'. The poem tells of a love of yellow roses that conceivably bloomed in Naden's garden at Pakenham House. This transitional sonnet appears to provide a connection between spring and summer and celebrates these seasons of abundance whilst looking tentatively ahead to later hardship. Naden's microscopic focus on nature is evident in the first quatrain of 'July, 1878'. She describes the early morning moisture on the undulating purple beech tree leaves (sometimes known as copper beech) as analogous to being flung around on a stormy sea. In 'Sunset' the sun sets on a beautiful August day that appears to remind Naden of her visit to Stratford; in line five she repeats the 'arching lindens' description from line five, in 'Stratford-on-Avon, May 14th, 1880'. This is not a story about the struggle for survival by the creatures. It is a

poem of the natural world and so the word, ‘gleeful’ refers to the trees and their struggles with the wind; this gives the appearance of being at peace with their world and environment. The poem ‘September, 1880’ heralds the approach of autumn but rather than sadness for dying roses, Naden sees the season as a continuum of the dying summer and the earlier spring. In ‘Songs Before Daybreak’ the birds sing hopefully in anticipation of the approaching daybreak, despite the ensuing danger to them of an imminent storm, in their evolutionary struggle for survival.

The absence of God throughout the sonnet cycle seems especially poignant in ‘The Seed’. This is because nature, not God, provides all the nurturing of the seed, via the mother plant, through the protection offered by winter via the ‘frost-bound sod,’ (1881: 125). Furthermore, it is nature that provides the warming powers of the springtime sun to awaken it fully to life. Nature’s nurturing and energy suggests that there is no need for the supernatural because everything is self-sustaining. The potential sense of isolation that this could manifest, through the approaching winter in ‘October, 1879’, seems to reflect Naden’s own feelings. The ‘dolorous year’ and the ‘ever-living loneliness’ (126), in the first quatrain, act as poignant counterpoints to the spectacular autumn colours produced by the deciduous azalea leaves. In ‘November, 1878’, the sky is devoid of emotion or colour. Birds no longer offer ‘conjubilant’ song (as we read in ‘September, 1880’) but instead they are now pining. The trees in ‘Sunset’ that rejoiced ‘in plenitude of life’ are now funereal in their stark blackness. A light covering of snow, however, suggests the innocence of the future spring reverie but at this moment there are ‘No whispered hopes of any future birth’ (1881: 127). This ‘future birth’ is glimpsed in ‘December, 1879’ with the earth portrayed as mother and the seeds are children ‘uncouth of hue and form’ (1881: 128). The earth is naked and asleep as if awaiting birth. This suggestion of a relationship between earth, nature, mother, children and the heavens is captured in the sestet where the earth as

potential mother is still waiting for springtime to give birth. Naden invests the earth with great strength and the potential to give joy and bestow love just as, perhaps, she envisaged her own mother.

The sonnets in the above cycle were written during a time of transformation for Naden as she began her academic career and personal journey into womanhood. Religion had provided succour during her early years but the sonnet cycle is evidence of God disappearing from her view as her education increases. I will conclude the chapter by briefly analysing the final fifteen sonnets of the collection in four thematic areas. By considering them in this way I can reveal the template for Naden's thinking for the rest of her life, and one which she develops more clearly in her later poetry. Three sonnets take up the theme of nature in ways that allow Naden the freedom to express different facets of nature outside of her sonnet cycle. Another three sonnets concern the search for knowledge and the nature of truth if one accepts that within nature lies the essence of that search. Six sonnets consider what the search for such truths, and the knowledge that we gain, means for religious faith and in the waning of its power the crisis of faith that ensues for some individuals. Finally, I will analyse three powerful sonnets that encompass these themes through philosophy which rivalled poetry as a key element in Naden's life.

The adult narrator who reflects on a lonely childhood in 'Day-Dreams' certainly parallels Naden's own childhood self at Pakenham House. Even allowing for the maturity of the narrator, the enchanted land described is, surprisingly, not one of childish fantasies but one where pain, hatred and fear have been eliminated. In 'To Amy, On Receiving Her Photograph' the narrator appears to peer into a black and white sketch of a landscape to perceive the essence of the colours and hence the life that nature brings, but which has been somehow lost in the original. Similarly, in the sestet, the narrator ponders on a grey photograph of Amy that hides her true essence from all but those who knew her. The

essence of nature is missing from Amy's monochrome photograph but Naden endows it with a life-giving energy. The sonnet 'Beauty' gives primacy to nature's seemingly eternal beauty through plants and flora as opposed to human conceptions of beauty bound by fashion and ephemera. In the octet nature is depicted as a timeless artist who creates beauty even out of unpromising material. Unusually, for her sonnets in this collection Naden mentions God in the sestet describing beauty as his servant who in turn sees herself as sovereign to man.

The abstract nature of beauty inevitably leads Naden to question the meaning of reality and the sonnet 'Illusions' is, therefore, concerned with the search for Truth. Truth is deployed as a capitalised noun perhaps signifying something that is timeless, transcending human life and universal. When read in this way, the sonnet seems to suggest that humans are inescapably wretched, because ultimately Truth is something that is beyond our reach. When referring to 'those that seem to love her less' (1881: 134), the narrator seems to have in mind doubters and agnostics and their belief that a search for such Truth represents the unknowable. In the sestet Naden is not necessarily privileging religion, science or poetry but appears to be saying that there is a higher truth to be sought and our daily sensations are mere illusions of a higher truth. These illusions are thrown into sharp relief in 'The Painter to the Musician' and its quasi-religious language of worship, shrines and devotion, probing for the essence of the appeal and the purpose of the arts. The sonnet 'Semele' is a plea for continuing to strive for knowledge.[16] Semele is fated not to live a normal passive life because she is loved by Zeus. She appears to lack 'earth-born' (1881: 10) qualities but perhaps this is because she has transcended the earth in her relationship with a God. The

[16] In Greek mythology Semele was a Theban princess who became a love interest of Zeus. She became pregnant by him and the jealous Hera, in disguise, makes her doubt Zeus's love. Semele challenges Zeus to grant her a wish to appear before him. In doing so, as no human can see him without combusting, this is her fate. Her unborn child, Dionysus, is saved by Zeus sewing him into his thigh and is, therefore, a God. He saves his mother from the Underworld and she lives as an apotheosised God – Thyone.

nub of the sonnet appears to be Naden's resolve to pursue Truth, here exemplified (as so often by painters) by the mysteries of light. Light provides a backdrop also to 'Morning Twilight', which sketches a person who has not had a restful night's sleep and consequently is too tired to be either optimistic or pessimistic: 'Shades of dead grief, endured and overcome,' (1881: 136) is a stoic response to previous states of pain that still linger and one is tempted to read into this a reference to the death of Naden's mother.

Six of the final fifteen sonnets have doubt or a crisis of faith as their motif. The narrator of 'Starlight. I' wanders a pre-industrial town at night, where all is colourless but lit by the stars, 'The glow of distant aeons guides my feet' (1881: 142). By grounding the individual amongst the dreariness of the town Naden creates a mood of weary mortality in a similar manner to James Thomson's lengthy poem 'The City of Dreadful Night'. Unlike Thomson, whose poem is bleakly atheistic, Naden uplifts the mood in her sonnet dramatically; in the sestet, as the stars that have lit the way through the dreariness, now we learn 'my ecstasy control;' (1881: 142). Amidst this seeming epiphany of the communing with the stars all is calm, as the narrator appears to ascend to the heavens, leaving the earth behind. This connects the sonnet with 'The Astronomer' at the beginning of the collection:

> Yet hope and ecstasy desert me not,
> But coldly shine, like moonlit snows;
> This earthly dream, renounced yet unforgot,
> To heavenly splendour grows. (1881: 5)

For the narrator of 'Starlight. I' the prize, like the astronomer, appears to be to experience eternity but not in a supernatural afterlife because, once again, God is absent. When the narrator of 'Starlight. II' writes that 'Man needs no dread unwonted Avatar' (1881: 143), this appears to be a confident rejection of a Godhead or his putative prophets on earth. In 'The Pantheist's Song of Immortality' the ripples changing the sandy sea bed are a metaphor for human actions changing the world in imperceptible ways whereas, in

‘Starlight. II’, the ripples emanate from the stars and in their rhythmic intensity is the essence of eternal life:

> Each ripple, starting long decades ago,
> Pulsing to earth its blue or golden glow,
> Beats with the life of some immortal star. (1881: 143)

A desperate priest who is sick and dying, having absolved many people of their sins at the end of their lives, now has his own crisis of faith in the octet of ‘The Priest's Prayer’. His numerous provisions of comfort to the dying does not provide him with the succour that he needs himself and the octet ends with a plea for someone to help him to recover his faith:

> But now that *I* am sick, who shall revive
> My hopeless faith, or save my soul alive,
> Since that elixir fails, which was mine own? (1881: 138)

The sense of disillusionment continues in the sonnet ‘Weariness’. Here we learn that a seemingly devout person is worn out, in part through his battles about faith with scientists and evolutionists. Although ostensibly resilient to their attacks, he is physically and mentally shattered by them. He may well be having the last rights administered to him by a priest and this clearly couples it to ‘The Priest’s Prayer’. Worn out by the tribulations of life he longs for rest but the prospects of eternal lie induce further feelings of doubt:

> But now, at last, my prayer for sleep is heard:
> Forgive me, Lord! Thy promises are true,
> And yet I have not strength enough to hope. (1881: 139)

God and the universe are combined in ‘The Agnostic's Psalm’ in a celebration of pantheism. The title’s conflation of agnosticism with a biblical reference to a psalm provides a clue to the sonnet’s intention to address the meaning of God:

> OH Thou, who art the life of heaven and earth,
> Eternal Substance of all things that seem;
> Or but the glorious phantom of a dream
> That in the brain of mortal man has birth:
> To know that Thou dost live were little worth,
> Not knowing Thee; yet oft the heart will deem
> That through its inmost deeps Thy light doth stream,
> Bestowing peace for grief, calm joy for mirth.

E'en thus rich music enters tuneless ears,
Tuneless, and all untrained by ordered notes,
Yet its ethereal essence inward floats,
And mingling with the secret source of tears,
Awhile endues the spirit's wistful sight
With dim perceptions of unknown delight. (1881: 140)

The, 'Eternal Substance' of the second line is redolent of Spinoza in *The Ethics* (*Part I. Concerning God*): 'By God [he writes], I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence' (Smith 2003: 33). Perhaps God is a dream created by man or, as a creation of the brain, he lives through our hearts and emotions. This manifestation of God through light and energy is ethereal in quality rather like music. We sense and feel its essence but cannot touch or grasp its quintessence. This marrying of the unknowable agnostic quality of the 'Substance' (for God is never referred to by name) and reference in the sonnet's title to a psalm is a sacred song or hymn is redolent of a monistic pantheism. The final meaning remains elusive but perhaps this is intentional. Another entreaty for the importance of philosophy, influenced by Darwinian thoughts and language, can be read in 'Speech And Silence'. The first quatrain considers human power to interpret language through facial expressions and mannerisms as Darwin writes in the *Descent*:

> Now when naturalists observe a close agreement in numerous small details of habit, tastes, and dispositions between two or more domestic races, or between nearly-allied natural forms, they use this fact as an argument that all are descended from a common progenitor who was thus endowed; (1871 Vol I: 233)

The final three poems in this group of sonnets are concerned with philosophy. The title of the sonnet 'Undiscerned Perfection' provides a further clue as to Naden's state of mind at this point in her life. 'Undiscerned' can mean not distinguished, not perceived distinctly or not recognised whilst 'Perfection' indicates a state of flawlessness. This seemingly oxymoronic title makes sense if the sonnet is read as a paean to Naden's nascent engagement in philosophy. In *Songs and Sonnets,* it appears immediately after the nature

cycle and seems, therefore, a purposeful act as she confidently espouses philosophical reflection as nature's ally. The realm beyond the darkness that Naden refers to in the first line of the octet is philosophy, which she wants the reader to know she has studied intensely. It continues with startling imagery of light and motion that emerges through the darkness of the lack of knowledge, to herald a philosophical epiphany, almost religious in its intensity. The octet then ends unequivocally in its secular invocation of the potential for the unification of poetry, science and philosophy. The sestet acknowledges that, for most people, this fusion is not evident and the resultant harmony of the cosmos and the natural world is beyond most intellects. For Naden, this is where her path to certain knowledge and to enlightenment lies, as the final two lines announce:

> BEYOND the realm of dull and slumberous Night
> I long have wandered with unwearied feet;
> The land where Poetry and Science meet
> Streaks the far distance with a magic light:
> Fair visions glide before my dazzled sight,
> And shine, and change, and pass with motion fleet,
> But never clear, and steadfast, and complete
> In one transcendent brilliancy unite.
>
> I know, the seeming discord is but mine;
> The glory is too great for mortal eyes,
> All powerless to discover the divine
> And perfect harmony of earth and skies:
> I know that each confused and tortuous line,
> To fuller sight, in true perspective lies. (1881: 129)

My objective in this chapter has been to analyse Naden's complete early output as a poet and to trace the development of her religious and scientific beliefs through her evolutionary narratives. I have done this within key thematic areas and this has begun to illuminate our understanding of Naden's development. First, in 'Science and Religion', I have shown Naden working through the various strands of religion that were of interest to her during this period. She engages with paganism and early polytheistic beliefs, such as druidism, and explores the emergence of monotheism through Christianity's challenge to

those early beliefs. Finally, she explores the austerity of religious devotion to Catholicism for orders such as the Carmelite Nuns and the Sisters of Mercy. Her brief exploration of mysticism is a precursor to later writings, to be considered in the next chapter. Although her engagement with pantheism is equally brief it produced, arguably her finest poem of this period, 'The Pantheist's Song of Immortality'. The remainder of the science poems in the section consider the subject of doubt, the roles of science, nature and the possible lack of a Godhead. What Naden is doing in this early part of her career is reaching out, as in 'Light at Eventide', for a form of syncretism which would bring together disparate elements of religion and unite them with science. Before this reconciliation can occur, though, Naden writes several poems exploring the juxtaposition of an uncaring natural selection versus sexual selection which offers some, albeit limited, choices for women, which I explored in the next section.

In 'Sexual Selection' I have shown that Darwin's own admission of the speculative nature of his own theory was anathema to a scientist-philosopher like Naden. Consequently, she challenges sexual selection by exploring the many strands of thought relevant to the theory. Naden considers the possibility of loneliness and isolation through female choice of a career over love in 'The Lady Doctor'; equivocation about the benefits of sexual choice for women in 'Love versus Learning'; she mocks the pretentions of male choice and posturing in 'Two Artists'; the fickle nature of human sexual selection in 'Maiden Meditation' and what happens to sexual selection when we get older in 'Changed'. Throughout these poems, Naden challenges the Darwinian notion of male superiority by often reversing roles and giving women an active rather than passive role. Her playful reversal of gender stereotypes often displays an amused detachment towards Darwinian attempts at a clear-cut definition of a complex subject.

In the third section, ‘Sonnets’, I have shown how Naden creates sustained states of feeling throughout the thirty-five sonnets. In beginning to draw together both Darwinian science and Spencerian philosophy, Naden’s maxim seems to be to observe and to analyse scientifically but to interpret philosophically. Whereas Darwin’s indifferent natural world could suggest that life was meaningless, Spencer elevated the importance of our consciousness in the natural world to restore meaning to life, as religion faded away. Naden takes her own sensory experiences of nature and turns them into moods or states of consciousness in a Spencerian mode. This is not unequivocal, though, because Spencer believed that the universe, if interpreted materialistically, also had no meaning. Naden did interpret the universe materialistically and her nature sonnets, whilst reflecting the influence of Spencer, are also a testament to her philosophical departure from him at points of disagreement. For example, Spencer was not a materialist nor was he an idealist and yet the paradox that emerges, in Naden’s championing of him, is that these were both major elements in Hylo-Idealism. This is, in part explainable by the fact that despite Spencer’s repudiation, much of his work draws upon materialism for its inspiration and, therefore, I explore Naden’s viewpoint in relation to Spencer in Chapter Three.

Throughout her early poetry Naden contemplates science and religion as a means of communing with nature but the closer she feels that she gets, through her awed response to the natural world, she finds that love is not returned and this creates occasional states of isolation and despair. Such negative feelings, however, are outweighed by the number of her poems that either offer hope in nature, celebration, communing, awe, harmony and optimism. Naden concludes her early poetry with brief affirmations of the pantheist and agnostic position which she seems to have reached by this period on her own spiritual and scientific journey. These affirmations are now analysed further in the next chapter as Naden discovers a more confident and assertive voice in her later poetry.

Chapter 2 – The New Orthodoxy: Later poetry (1887-1889)

> Things with fin, and claw, and hoof
> Join to give us perfect proof
> That our being's warp and woof
> We from near and far win;
> Yet your flippant doubts you vaunt,
> And–to please a maiden aunt–
> You've been heard to say you can't
> Pin your faith to Darwin! (Naden 1887: 141)

Naden's poem 'The New Orthodoxy', which I analyse later in this chapter, encompasses several of the themes relevant to a more nuanced understanding of her later poetry. These include Naden's engagement with her new orthodoxy of science and philosophy, from which religion is largely absent. Despite this, Naden is always exploring the means for reconciliation between religion and science and in her engagement with philosophy she seems to embrace the maxim that Spencer explains:

> Religion, everywhere present as a weft running through the warp of human history, expresses some eternal fact; while it is almost a truism to say of Science that it is an organised mass of facts, ever growing, and ever being more completely purified from errors. And if both have bases in the reality of things, then between them there must be a fundamental harmony. (Spencer 1900: 16)

Spencer's attempt to accord religion and science some measure of respectability together, under the aegis of factual reality, is an ever-present feature in Naden's poetry. Spencer was aware of the challenges this poses and so explains that harmony can still be achieved by both sides accepting the unknowable: 'If Religion and Science are to be reconciled, the basis of reconciliation must be this deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts that the Power which the Universe manifests to us is inscrutable' (Spencer 1900: 37). Ultimately Naden accepts the premise but rejects its 'inscrutable' conclusion, as I shall explain in Chapter Three. I will show how Naden draws on Spencer's statement that, 'Knowledge of the lowest kind is *un-unified* knowledge; Science is *partially-unified* knowledge; Philosophy is *completely-unified* knowledge' (Spencer 1900: 115) as a *modus operandi* for the poetry of her new orthodoxy.

I will consider the choice between the objective world of science and the complexity of human sexual relationships, especially in relation to the subjective world of sexual selection. These are key motifs in Naden's writing and I will analyse these evolutionary narratives in her later poetry, predominantly her final collection *A Modern Apostle; The Elixir of Life; The Story of Clarice; and other Poems.* My use of this collection as a dividing line between her early and later poetry is apposite because the collection shows a growth in Naden's ideas and her increasing maturity. As well as increased technical skill, the poetic language that Naden uses ranges from impassive to imperious. It is occasionally humorous and increasingly confident and strident in tone when compared to her earlier work. Surprisingly, the three long poems that give the book its title have rarely been discussed in depth. By analysing each poem in its entirety, I will show Naden's development through her attempt to reconcile potentially contradictory and damaging ideas in the debate between religion and science. Although Naden is often equivocal in this endeavour, her ideas are even more strongly expressed in her prose, which I discuss in Chapter Three.

I will analyse Naden's poetry in thematic sections as I did in Chapter One. In 'Science and Religion', I analyse two long poems that both reference pagan polytheistic pasts. 'A Modern Apostle' is given a contemporary religious setting using the voice of a religious fundamentalist whilst 'The Elixir of Life' is a tale of a King and his potion for eternal life. What unites the poems is the protagonists' desires to engage with nature by recognising its power and its Darwinian wastage, abundance, cruelty and death. By doing so they attempt, in different ways, to seek a harmony with nature. In 'A Modern Apostle' this harmony is glimpsed through a religious conversion to pantheism whereas in 'The Elixir of Life' it is sought through the King's eternal life. In the second section I again analyse poems about 'Sexual Selection'. 'The Story of Clarice', explores the notion of love

in harmony with the natural world. Here Naden shows the effects of the natural world on a human mind and on our resulting propensity to love. Naden satirises sexual desire and sexual selection through her 'Evolutional Erotics' poems, where science is foregrounded in an increasingly confident poetic voice. In 'Sonnets' I show how Naden considers what earthly pleasures mean in terms of religious tolerance and belief. These sonnets are confident assertions of science, by contrast with her early poetry, and deal with evolution, nebular theory, botany and philosophy.

Science and Religion

'A Modern Apostle' foregrounds the subjective, emotional choices of young lovers, through the lenses of religion and science. Naden's first long dramatic poem is ten times longer than any of her previously published poems and demonstrates her increasing technical skill and confidence through the technically challenging *ottava rima* rhyme scheme. Oscar Wilde provides a synopsis of 'A Modern Apostle': 'a young clergyman who preaches Pantheistic Socialism in the Free Church of some provincial manufacturing town, converts everybody, except the woman whom he loves, and is killed in a street riot' (Wilde 1888: 81). Wilde neglects to mention that the woman is a gifted mathematics student called Ella who loves Alan but does not subscribe to his religious beliefs.

Naden's close friend Madeline Daniell was moved by 'A Modern Apostle' feeling that Naden is now engaging with all the issues germane to her time; she writes: 'A Modern Apostle' touches with great power and pathos on the evolutionary, scientific and neological changes now unsettling the religious belief of thoughtful minds; but, as in *Robert Elsmere* love overcomes all differences of faith' (Daniell 1890: xi). William S. Peterson (quoting Archibald Tait) has a view that, 'The great evil is–that the liberals are deficient in religion and the religious are deficient in liberality. This was the profound religious dilemma of the Victorian age to which Mrs. Ward addressed herself in Robert

Elsmere' (1976: 136). Mary Ward's novel *Robert Elsmere* (1888) was published a year after 'A Modern Apostle', and there are striking similarities between the love between Alan and Ella in Naden's poem and Robert and Catherine in Ward's novel. In *Robert Elsmere*, Catherine still loves Robert despite his refusal to renounce his 'New Brotherhood of Christ' religion as he lies dying; and Robert still loves Catherine despite her ardent Christian evangelicalism. Robert and Catherine's love survives the apparent religious schism between them and Catherine even attends services dedicated to Robert's new religion, after his death, to show how love has overcome their differences. Daniell seems to be comparing this aspect of the novel with the deathbed scene in 'A Modern Apostle' where Alan and Ella's love results in a conciliation between them that unites Alan's religious doubts and Ella's materialism through a celebration of the natural world. Whereas in *Robert Elsmere* Catherine seeks Robert's recantation to ensure that they will be together in a Christian afterlife, Alan and Ella see a unity with nature as the means to preserve their notion of eternal life. Daniell's point in comparing *Robert Elsmere* and 'A Modern Apostle', is that in both novel and poem love finds a way to transcend differences of dogma whether it is based upon faith, science or philosophy.

The poem's contemporary setting, a cold garret room with a 'half-starved fire;' anthropomorphises the fire to provide a natural backdrop. This contrasts with Alan's writing which is described in intellectual terms: 'the sweets/Of Power or Wisdom, one in mean attire;' (1887: 3). Alan's Celtic ancestry unites the natural world imagery and pagan naturalism which were themes that Naden undertakes separately in her earlier poetry. Naden's 'angel-bands' (1887: 4)[17] in stanza three are zoomorphic in their guarding against danger as a creature does in the natural world to provide a warning of the conflicts ahead.

[17] This reference to Seraphims and Cherubims in the outer band, to the Arch-angels and Angels in the innermost band, unites theological iconography with evolutionary language.

Alan has had, like Naden, a non-conformist upbringing but his was in the Levite tradition where he 'Took up the ark of God with reverent fears,' (1887: 4)[18] and he will not indulge in earthly pleasures:

> Clean would he keep his soul, pure from the stain
> Of thought, of earthly love, of lore profane. (1887: 4)

Clearly, Alan's religion is suspicious of the despoiling influence of human emotions and of the corrupting impact of scientific knowledge. Such teaching sees the brain and the heart as unsaintly organs exposed to natural impulses of thought and feeling:

> For unregenerate virtues–the black art
> Of feeling and of thought is ne'er unlearned,
> And spirits come, although the books be burned. (1887: 4)

Yet Alan, again like Naden, is desirous of knowledge, despite his childhood indoctrination that accepted no challenge to the word of God and wants to:

> Dwell in a land of streams innumerous,
> And pine a self-afflicted Tantalus? (1887: 5)

Tantalus was forever denied the fruit above and the water below and it seems likely that Naden is recalling her own dilemma between the religious non-conformity of her upbringing and the scientific agnosticism of her adulthood:

> A second-hand bookstall was his fatal tree
> Of knowledge, bearing divers kinds of fruit: (1887: 5)

The forbidden fruit are books and the image recalls the story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:9) where the tree of knowledge of good and evil is planted alongside the tree of life. Naden's juxtaposition of the religious and the scientific foregrounds the Darwinian tree. Its seemingly luscious peaches are bitter, ruddy apples produce a dangerously strong cider and some roots produce drugs that act on the brain to reduce pain. The tree contains important hidden knowledge, therefore, that challenges God's omniscience. The Bible tells us that the forbidden fruit gave Adam and Eve knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3: 3), though,

[18] A reference to the Ark of the Covenant in 'Exodus' and to the Ten Commandments.

and in stanza eight Alan, although guilty and contrite, cannot stop himself from pursuing the quest for knowledge. This seems to echo Naden's own journey between her religious upbringing and her scientific career. Christianity, that was so dominant in earlier poems such as 'The Roman Philosopher to Christian Priests' or 'The Last Druid', is now a shadow of its former self:

> Pale Christianity with Christ expunged,
> Faint Unbelief deploring its own skill,
> Great tomes of metaphysic lore, that sponged
> The World away, leaving the lonely Will:
> Carlyle he conned, and–guilt of dye intenser!
> Dallied with Darwin and with Herbert Spencer. (1887: 6)

The use of 'conned' in line five means that he studied Carlyle but his dalliance with Darwin and Spencer suggests that his scientific studying was much less rigorous. Naden's point here is opaque but by aligning himself with Carlyle instead of Darwin and Spencer, Naden suggests that Alan pursues the wrong path. His faith is restored, however, when he begins to believe that it is stronger than any scientific arguments. Furthermore, science creates a moral vacuum once the fear of God is removed but the death and destruction Alan fears is, to a Darwinian, merely part of the evolutionary struggle:

> Saying, "Why crave and yearn to be deceived?
> She who lies low deserved to be cast down;
> 'Tis Nature's mandate–to the puny rival
> Defeat and death; to the more fit, survival." (1887: 7)[19]

In the struggle for survival, an anthropomorphised Faith attempts to fight back but, rather than adapt or vary to survive, she grows 'paler, fainter, freshly maimed,' (1887: 7) whilst science grows stronger and ever more confident.[20] Alan is disturbed by this increasingly confident scientific community and his faith is shaken by its attacks on religion. Optimistically, he considers looking for alternatives:

[19] The term 'Survival of the Fittest' was created by Herbert Spencer in *Principles of Biology* (1864) and eventually adopted by Darwin, himself, in the fifth edition of the *Origin* in 1869.
[20] Faith is given a female gender in 'A Modern Apostle' and was a name often given to girls at the time – if there were triplets it was often the convention to call them Faith, Hope and Charity.

His deep eyes shone with rapture as he bade
To Love and Faith, for Hope's dear sake, adieu: (1887: 9)[21]

Alan abandons human desires and his traditional religious belief, which he refers to as 'the grim Orthodox', to pursue the path of Hope and in this search, considers Catholicism:

… whispered that he drew
His doctrines from vile books of Babylon,
By scoffers, named Carlyle and Emerson. (1887: 9)

Naden's reference to Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson recognises their nearly forty-year friendship until their deaths in the early 1880s. Her Babylonian reference in the preceding line also shows that she was aware of their anti-Catholic views. Denis Paz offers a possible explanation to Naden's meaning here regarding Carlyle:

> One major strand of Victorian thought was optimism about the future, and the conscious rejection of the past in favour of modernity–especially in the light of the economic achievements of the Industrial Revolution. This attitude lent itself to the rejection of Roman Catholicism, for that religion was identified as outmoded…Other writers such as Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, and J.A. Froude joined in this view. (1992: 59)

Clearly, Naden's increasingly Spencerian views concur with Paz's identification of progress and concomitant rejection of the past and hints at her own rejection of Catholicism. Richard Birdsall offers a similar insight regarding Emerson:

> Emerson could still admit the subjective value of the Roman Church to an individual. Catholicism, he admitted, might well be enjoyed in a dilettante way as a kind of historical romance–a saga to be savoured for its beauty and dramatic colour. But in terms of long-range ideological perspectives, he insisted that it must be emphatically rejected as untrue. Not only did it set itself against the obvious intuitions communicated by Nature to every individual, but it opposed the whole forward moment of history. (1959: 277)

Paz and Birdsall identify some strands of anti-Catholicism that Naden glimpses but deliberately leaves behind. In the pivotal stanzas twenty-one to twenty-three, Alan has an epiphanic realisation that nature, despite its abundance, waste and death, is awesome and

[21] This appears to be a Biblical reference: 'And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13: 13).

beautiful. This evolutionary narrative sees Alan revelling in its scale and beauty until the ominous last line:

> Life's voices murmured; scale and fur and wing
> Bright glistened; while Man trod, apparent king. (1887: 10)

The traditional theological foregrounding of man is rejected by Naden's Darwinism hence he is described as only an 'apparent king.' It is not beauty and wonderment but death and destruction that are revealed and man, whilst no longer foregrounded, is part of the brutality of the natural world:

> …then deeper gazing, [he] saw how life
> Preyed upon life; how men, ruthless and proud,
> Destroyed their fellow-men with club and knife
> And fire-brand; or by deadlier arms, and fraud
> Refined, and smooth hypocrisy unawed. (1887: 10)

Alan now believes that the way to understand nature's beauty, fecundity and power, the struggle for life and the creative energy that set everything in motion, is to embrace a new form of religion:

> Yet in the stained Earth and the darkened Sun,
> He saw, by some revealing miracle,
> The Eternal Power which makes the Many, One,
> Shining through all; the Law made visible:
> As though this embryo world had just begun
> To quicken with the shaping Principle
> Which silently prepares its robe of youth
> A body all translucent to the Truth. (1887: 10)

Alan comes to believe in a God that is not the traditional anthropomorphic supernatural being but a spirit inhabiting everything. His epiphany is both glorious and ridiculous, in its echoes of God invoking Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, as Alan's hubris interprets the voice as selecting him to preach the new religion of pantheism:

> Then came a Voice–"Behold what thou hast sought
> So long; thyself, and Nature's Self, behold!
> Thou couldst not spend thy prayers and tears for nought,
> By human pain my Being I unfold;
> I am the end and essence of thy thought,
> The life of all new creeds and symbols old;

I rule in star and atom; all mankind
Work out my purpose in their battlings blind. (1887: 11)

This stanza binds mankind and nature together like the atoms that constitute the cosmos. Alan is steadfast now and, with this all-encompassing new creed, his conversion to pantheism is complete. Any such creed will face objections, intransigence, ignorance, fear or superstition and Naden turns her attention to these facets next.

In section two Alan confesses his new-found beliefs to his parents, a devout and joyless father and a mother still imbued with the poetic spirit of her early life that had so beguiled Alan as a child. His father's cold-hearted ranting and the mother's pitying tears for the estrangement from his father, only serve to strengthen his resolve as he leaves them to search for converts. Naden seems to want us to admire Alan's stoicism in the face of such powerful objections and the conviction of his new-found belief. One senses that he will need these qualities if his parents' objections are a measure of what he will face in the harshness of the industrial society into which he now ventures. This is presaged through the noisy indifference of mechanisation as Alan moves to a provincial English town:[22]

A town marked Liberal both by creeds and votes,
Where every individual voice did melt
  In the loud hum of Progress; jarring notes
Of small exclusive sects were merely felt
  Like nettle-stings when dock-leaf antidotes
Are plenteous; there, the party-leader's cue
Was to hope all things, and believe a few. (1887: 18)

Social sounds blend with unfeeling industrial noise as humans have seemingly no choice but, in Spencerian mode, to adapt to the demands that the mechanised and natural environment has placed upon them. This is exemplified in the artful description of the political debates between competing parties as being like nettle stings from one requiring an antidote from the other. When Alan meets an old friend and a political activist, George,

[22] This could well be Birmingham, given that Queen Victoria did not grant it city status until 1889 and it was, indeed, a centre of non-conformity during Naden's adult life.

the interconnectedness of the human and the natural world is exemplified through George's freethinking observations that are at once irreligious and scientific. George's discomfort at the notion of religion and science residing together is evident in the zoomorphism of the human condition when he urges Alan to 'fearlessly unfold your wings,' (1887: 18) and to embrace new ideas. George is a cynic, though, and Naden's lightness of tone suggests that, despite the confidence that he exudes, he knows that science is no closer than religion to answering the mystery of God. Section two concludes with an optimistic Alan embracing a Darwinian awe of nature. Alan is ebullient and pantheistic in his celebration of the natural world, has seemingly left behind the colourless and humourless world of the religious zealotry of his father:

> Thrushes and blackbirds carolled joyful strains,
> And all things sang, in cadence manifold–
> "Rejoice, rejoice, with bird and tree and flower!
> Rejoice, rejoice, in plenitude of power!" (1887: 21)

This conclusion to section two, however, ends in an ostensibly anti-evolutionary narrative that seems once again to be drawing Alan back to Christian theology in its invocation of the Bible:

> Of cloudless Truth; Faith, Hope, and Love, these three,
> At last should blend in perfect trinity. (1887: 21)

The cloudless Truth that Naden uses to precede the recurring Christian reference suggests that nature presents no barriers to enlightenment. For the final noble Biblical virtue, Charity, again Naden uses the popular word 'Love' because most modern translations used this term.[23] This religious language heightens the dramatic effect but also renders it somehow unreal, overblown and at odds with the reality of Alan's situation.

[23] Despite its modern connotations nineteenth century readers would have understood it to mean love for God, love for our friends and neighbours as being superior to love for ourselves.

Alan's optimism is shattered at the beginning of section three because his new-found pantheism has gone down badly with the potential converts. The scientific imagery in a sermon has stunned the listeners:

> Alan had preached his sermon–grave, devout,
> Yet full of lightnings and electric shocks
> For tender souls who reckoned even doubt
> Less damnable than faith unorthodox; (1887: 22)

Alan's pantheism shocks the congregation who, George later suggests, are too uneducated to accept such notions. The inference here is that the emerging middle classes and the newly educated are more receptive to such controversial and secular messages. Naden is not advocating academic elitism, though, but rather the need to harness an emerging scientific confidence to be used to benefit all mankind:

> Where e'en the poorest may behold the Tree
> Of Life, and taste, and eat his fill for nought: (1887: 23)

The Tree of Life is clearly a religious metaphor in its representation of life given by God (Genesis 2:9), but it is also a scientific metaphor for a branching, Darwinian, tree of life. It is the latter that Naden foregrounds. This is abstruse for the uneducated and abstract in its ideas for the educated and George, a scientific materialist, advises Alan that to woo Ella he will need a far more cerebral proposal:

> The heavenly host she watches from her attics,
> She knows the name and place of every star;
> True incarnation of Pure Mathematics,
> She cares for all that is abstruse or far:
> Go, woo her with Dynamics and with Statics,
> And term your love a force molecular;
> She then, perchance, may fathom your intention–
> Plain language is beneath her comprehension. (1887: 24)

Naden's switch to a scientific and contemporary language devoid of any religion is indicative of the material world that the mathematician Ella represents. The uneasy conjunction of religion and science simply renders even more complex the tangle of human relationships with different beliefs and differing levels of education:

…A town unwalled
Was that society, with no defence
Save the united force of Faith and Science–
In truth, a somewhat perilous alliance. (1887: 26)

Pantheistic socialism is not the balm that Alan hoped for when faced with the least educated people in society because it offers nothing tangible to alleviate their suffering. Philosophically, it seems to be unappealing to the more educated too. Any creed must address, in either temporal, philosophical or spiritual terms, the seeming harshness of human life on earth and the point of that struggle. In an evolutionary sense one individual is not representative of a species, and it seems inevitable that Alan is doomed to fail. He continues his quest regardless and seems to glimpse the possibility of evolution moving towards a future state of perfection. Naden embraces this notion that such progress was not inevitable but possible:

Evolving from completed human grace
The future parent of a nobler race. (1887: 27)

This is Spencerian in its essence and Naden seems to be recalling Spencer's observation: 'While contemplating from the heights of thought, that far-off life of the race never to be enjoyed by them, but only by a remote posterity, they will feel a calm pleasure in the consciousness of having aided the advance towards it' (Spencer 1908 Vol II: 433).

Naden is aware, though, of the dangers of metaphysical abstraction that Ella dissects in a clinical fashion: 'no vague talk of liberal views/Can alter cosine and hypotenuse' (1887: 28). For a mathematician, everything has a basis in natural laws and logic. Consequently, the deist view of supernatural design without further interference or the theist view of supernatural design with continuing involvement are anathema. Through Ella's mother, Naden suggests this derision amongst the middle 'meaner' classes at both the deist and theist views:

Her mother, with shrewd mind of meaner class
Laughed inly, when she heard some "thinker" draw

The wonted music from his sounding brass,
    Showing that with approval Christ foresaw
This nineteenth century of steam and gas,
    And Mammon, and "Inexorable Law,"
Or wresting from St. Paul a strong opinion
In favour of the theory Darwinian. (1887: 28)

Yet the world of facts and logic can be a cold one, in its own way as harsh as nature. Ella, with her mathematical pursuits, seems to be poised between an unravelling past and an uncertain future. Without the comfort of religion this is, potentially, a joyless existence. Ella ponders whether Pantheism could present a reasonable counterpoint to the 'sage and mathematical?' (1887: 30). Section three concludes with Ella's surprising conversion but the real nature of that conversion is not revealed. This exploration of alternatives to religion, whilst tacitly accepting the biblical narrative, is indicative of a common strategy employed by people of Naden's background and class in the 1870s.

In section four Ella's love for Alan and acceptance of his creed is anthropomorphised by comparison with the scaling of snowy mountain peaks. The poetic language is heightened, in the first six stanzas, to an ecstatic degree. Alan's pantheistic zeal is conflated with his affection for Ella presaging a harmonious relationship between human and nature. This is interrupted by the ominous tolling of the bell for evening prayer. Ella now begins slowly to return to her scientific beliefs, seeing all religion as various forms of dogma no matter how well intentioned:

It was not this; but her deep-thinking brain
    Learned slowly, mournfully, against her will,
How mystic faiths are woven from a vain
    Tissue of dreams, which hold men captive still
In day-light; and she saw, with bitter pain,
    That every thought, deed, passion, good or ill,
Might thus be sanctified, and at its need
Find refuge in some hospitable creed. (1887: 36)

In the evolutionary complexity of human relationships Ella finds that she does still love Alan but not his beliefs and Alan loves Ella but not her beliefs. Naden's career is an

exemplar of how religion and science exist in an uneasy relationship in cultural encounter but this is even more problematical in human relationships. Alan and Ella's potential incompatibility perhaps mirrored Naden's own fears that her scientific training would exclude her from normal human relationships. In this stanza, Naden seems to be speaking about her own insecurities:

> What is a woman's hope when she is torn
> By passion and by thought, and cannot cease
> To think or love, nor teach herself to scorn
> Her deepest life, nor ever win release
> From the harsh yoke, too heavy to be borne,
> Of iron principles that crush her peace:
> Will not some opiate give her dreamful rest
> Till she return to the Great Mother's breast? (1887: 38)

Ella cannot commit to a relationship built on Alan's passionate embracing of the natural world and her own clinical detachment from it. In an echo of Naden's Hylo-Idealism she pleads with Alan that they should work together to find a new belief system, one that combines pantheism and materialism: 'Some firm foundation for a nobler Church!' (1887: 40). Ella's emotional trauma is tempered, though, by her evolutionary spirit of survival in her rejection of Alan.

The beginning of section five heralds the arrival of winter and the harshness and indifference of nature to the sufferings of the people. In evolutionary terms survival, through engaging with the demands of the environment, is not an equitable arrangement because, whilst some prosper and survive, others struggle or do not survive. Survival is not a given, as Alan despairingly moves amongst the increasingly starving populace, 'With hollow cheeks and sunken eyes lack-lustre;' (1887: 45) the fourth stanza reprises the Faith, Hope and Love of the end of section two. Alan's mien now suggests that in fact only his faith remains and he realises that this offers very little to the people in the face of nature's indifference. This suffering continues into the spring where Naden anthropomorphises Poverty (with a capital P) by endowing it with the ability to inflict pain. The denial of

design and teleology is exemplified through the unpredictable tumult of natural forces that in terms of evolutionary narratives connects Poverty and such forces with the inevitable demands of the environment. Now descriptions of natural events act as portents: ‘A sudden tumult, as of fire or fighting,’ (1887: 46), ‘Burst on them like a flood’ (1887: 46) and as it gathers pace, ‘like a stormy sea it surged,’ (1887: 47) and, as it nears Ella’s abode, ‘Such was the tide that towards the suburb rolled’ (1887: 48). The insurrection, caused because of poverty and nature’s indifference, is one to which neither the governing classes or the religious preachers have an answer. When Alan exhorts the mob to desist he suggests, in Spencerian terms, that humanity is an organism and individuals are merely part of that whole, unimportant in themselves and not representative of the whole species. This is a foolhardy and naïve attempt to assuage a rioting mob with philosophy, as is Alan’s appeal to a spirit of ‘universal kinship–to reveal/How men are sharers in the life Divine’ (1887: 49). Alan’s naivety stretches credibility as he appeals to the mob to use their minds to soothe what they feel in their hearts. If they reject God, then they must embrace atheism, which is a creed he associates with hatred, and this is unworthy of them. Unsurprisingly, he fails to convince them; he is struck down by a stone and is borne away to Ella’s house. The likely precedent for this incident was William Murphy and The Murphy Riots of the 1860s/1870s. Murphy was a far more combative personality than Alan but he was a national figure and well-known for inflammatory speeches attacking Catholicism. His speeches were so provocative that they often caused riots and in Cumberland in 1871 he was attacked by a mob and beaten unconscious. He died in May 1872 and is buried in Key Hill Cemetery where, seventeen years later, Naden was buried only a short distance away from Murphy’s grave. Although Alan’s earnest desire to help the people is clearly not comparable with Murphy’s anti-Catholic rhetoric, their respective fates seem to have parallels and perhaps were in Naden’s mind when she wrote the poem.

Alan's death now seems to be inevitable, brought on by a combination of the attack, the draining demands of his preaching and the environment. The pressure these factors have exerted echo the natural world of competition, wastage and death. All that he has left towards the end of his life is his Faith and, as he alternates between Christian visions and Pagan mysticism, Ella clings to Hope in the face of his certain death. Ella decides to try to help Alan's parents, given that she is the one who has broken the harmony of Faith, Hope and Charity by returning to science and leaving Alan with his faith alone. The big powerful man who had caused the mob to back away from Alan is now Ella's unlikely protector as she makes her way through the aftermath of the riot to Alan's parents' house. This man is typical of the type that Naden later comically portrays; he is big and brutish and yet one of nature's survivors due to his muscularity that has enabled him to adapt to the harsh environment. Ella's encounter with Alan's father is frightening in his passionate defence of his own religion and belief that his son is doomed to Hell. Upon being accused by his mother 'You slew my son!' (1887: 58) Ella's defence is that she meant to free Alan from their doomed love due to their incompatible beliefs. The final ten stanzas move towards Alan's demise and question whether he can reconcile his religious beliefs with his temporal existence:

> Stay with me, while I linger on the verge
> Of the unknown abyss, yet void of awe
> And fear, and ecstasy; I hear a dirge
> Wailing that Vision which of old I saw;
> Yet not in darkness but in glory merge
> My dreams, and yield to some transcendent Law,
> I know not how; for all is plunged and drowned
> In the bright waters of this peace profound. (1887: 60)

The 'Vision' that Alan refers to is the rejection of God in favour of pantheism; his final monologue to Ella is devoid of pleas to God. In the end, it appears that, in kissing Ella and declaring his love, he has restored the Faith, Hope and Love/Charity, that had so broken him earlier, when all that he had left was Faith. It is Faith, however, that now troubles him

the most. It also seems to trouble Naden because the final four stanzas are a collection of thoughts on love, life, nature and the universe, with God conspicuously absent. Alan and Ella reach a union of compromise that celebrates nature but does not believe that a greater afterlife awaits them. Naden seems to be arguing that those who reject Christian notions of eternal salvation and instead spend their lives in celebration and in harmony with nature are those that will live a life that is akin to eternity. Ella's final speech is a celebration of this world view in its natural, secular, glory and cements her inner feminine strength as Alan dies:

> I give whate'er I have of strength and skill;
> Trust me in this–what Woman can, I will. (1887: 62)

The end of the poem celebrates perpetual nature whilst recognising the harmonious whole of Ella and Alan's relationship, even in death:

> Long time she knelt; and when at last she rose
> Her features almost mirrored his repose. (1887: 63)

In the end, they are together in nature and the poem concludes as a Godless celebration of eternal life.

'The Elixir of Life' is another secular poem where the notion of a Christian God is irrelevant in the story of the King's eternal life. What motivates the central characters is the desire for the pursuit of pleasure, visualised by Naden in terms of the Darwinian notion of the avoidance of death and the desire to survive. The poem is a dramatic monologue in two-parts comprising eighty-one, eight-line stanzas in *ottava rima*. A narrator has a surreal vision of a King in an unknown land, a would-be philosopher and alchemist, who creates a potion that can provide eternal life. The King has selected a beautiful young woman called Marah, who he considers worthy to receive such an awesome gift, but she is in love with someone else. Together Marah and her lover plot to steal the potion from the King who is devastated by her betrayal. Marah is in turn betrayed by her lover but her confession to the

King does not provide a reconciliation. Marah is summoned and the King casts her out, like God casting Eve out of the Garden of Eden. As the servant maid who has informed the King about Marah's betrayal begs for her chance to share eternal life, stanza thirty-two seems to contain an ironic criticism of Darwinian misogyny through the King's ungratefully dismissive speech:

> Calm is the grave, and restful are the dead,
> But Life is rude, and tempest-tost, and bleak,
> And you will tire ere threescore years have sped:
> Your nature is too womanly and weak… (1887: 91)

The King chooses a new path alone which, given the eternity of his life, seems to suggest a future of unbearable loneliness. The poem concludes with a glimpse of this new life which is one of seeking to be in harmony with nature rather than pursuing earthly desires. The poem adopts the theme of Faith, Hope and Love from 'A Modern Apostle', with Faith equating to everlasting life, Hope in the form of the King, Love as represented by the King and Marah. The King claims to want to live in harmony with nature but this is problematical given his attitude towards the feminine and Naden portrays this dilemma by ironically mocking Darwinian notions of male superiority. The Faith, Hope and Love motif is reprised in stanza thirty-five but now love has become diseased and died. As with all things in the natural world it will grow again if the conditions are right for it to thrive:

> Love shrivels to black dust, but leaves alive
> Duty and Hope. When not a flower remains
> Unblighted, still the leafy boughs survive,
> And still the sap is mounting in their veins;
> No more, no more, my lonely life shall strive
> To put forth blossoms, nurturing canker-stains;
> Yet shall the tree aspire, and gather might
> By broader foliage from a clearer light. (1887: 92)

Love dies but Hope remains, symbolised here through the flower surviving disease and the tree's life force still intact. In all the King's tribulations, though, there is now one path left for his life and that is Hope for a pantheistic communing with nature:

There is one way of peace, but one–to live
The universal Life; to make the whole
Of Nature mine; to feel the laws which give
Form to her Being, sovereign in my soul:
By this one road, enfranchisement I gain
From the heart-stifling narrowness of pain. (1887: 93)

The final two lines reminds us that it was all a dream and, therefore, enables Naden to provide some distance from the secular subject of the poem:

With marvels, faded, and a chilly stream
Of work-day light poured in and quenched the dream. (1887: 95)

Naden continues to consider the nature of Hope in 'Resipiscentia'.[24] The poem consists of a conversation between three voices representing Doubt, Faith and Hope. The first two voices use either religious or archaic language, with the worldly-wise first voice being plagued by doubt, as if by a disease, through sins and fears. The second voice has experienced a spiritual rebirth that, although he has been prey to normal human emotions and weaknesses, has awakened a fresh and keener appreciation of the energy of life. He has health and vigour as if he has tasted a kind of heavenly elixir of life that has given him immortality through his new-found spirituality:

Oh come and taste and see what virtues lie
In this Elixir that has made me whole–
Though thou be sick to death, thou shalt not die–
Repent, and heal thy soul! (1887: 121)

The cynical first voice of this new-found zest for life questions the source of this rebirth:

Life as it is, and must be, and has been
No piecemeal penitence can show aright,
Deeming the one part foul, the other clean,
Here black, and there snow-white. (1887: 122)

[24] There are enigmatic Latin origins of this title. One of the most commonly quoted definitions of the word suggests that it means a change of mind (a derivation of resipiscere); it could also be taken to mean that one has recovered one's senses; or, as a noun, resipiscence, that one has been mistaken. The subtitle to the poem "Ye must be born again." is a Biblical reference to Jesus telling Nicodemus 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again' (John 3: 3).

Naden's point here appears to be that, given our imperfect nature and innate sinfulness, do our attempts at 'piecemeal penitence' have any lasting meaning given that we are destined to continue sinning? The First Voice frames this question using the secular language of nature:

> My grief has no beginning and no end;
> I do repent of antenatal sin,
> Whose poisoning juices thread my veins, and blend
> With the fresh life within. (1887: 122)

This ironic repentance of sins is questioning what can be done, given that there is nothing to purge us of it until we die. At this point, a third voice interjects with an optimism that seems to take inspiration from the imperceptible evolutionary transmutations that may not change our individual form, but that must act to change human nature over time:

> Daily thy tissues die–are born afresh
> Daily, not moving thee to joy or dole;
> Yet all the slow mutations of thy flesh
> Gently transmute thy soul. (1887: 123)

Hope, represented by the third voice, demonstrates a belief that a similar spiritual conversion or rebirth and acceptance into Heaven can be achieved through working hard and living a good life. It is this ethic that is shared by the Pharisees but challenged by Jesus, who warns them that a spiritual rebirth is necessary to enter the kingdom of Heaven:

> Long were the darkling months before thy birth,
> Long years regenerate a frame defiled:
> It may be thou shalt enter heaven on earth
> Clean as a pure-born child. (1887: 124)

As with so many of the poems in this collection Naden leaves any final meaning unclear. A trajectory of rebellion, represented by doubt, followed by religious rebirth, represented by faith, would have provided a satisfying poem. Her introduction, instead, of optimism through science, represented by Hope, that also framed the ending of 'The Elixir of Life', is further evidence that Naden is still attempting to resolve conflicting beliefs and the emotional states that they engender.

The ballad ‘Friendship’ is ostensibly a poem that can be read as highly sceptical of religion. It begins as a plea that the poor souls waiting for entry into Heaven should be allowed in because they are, after all, made in God’s own image (Genesis 1: 27). In the spirit of friendship, God (or it could be St Peter) is entreated to do this: ‘If thou have strength and purity of heart’ (1887: 128). The language is heightened to a religious sensibility in the plea to allow entry to human souls:

> The human soul that crieth at thy gates,
> Of man or woman, alien or akin,
> Tis thine own Self that for admission waits–
> Rise, let it in. (1887: 128)

Rather than suggesting that God is watching over us, the poem might be a plea to all humanity to extend the hand of friendship and to care for friends without religious motives. The ending is ambiguous but seems to suggest that while the flesh is imbued with human frailties, the soul is dead. There is no intrinsic connection to God but to an earthbound temporality and the vagaries of human existence. The final stanza, referring to the Bible: ‘wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts’ (Psalm 104:15) is a secular sentiment and human in its rejection of religion:

> Thy love is slain–thou canst not make it whole
> With all thy store of wine, and oil, and bread:
> Some passions are but flesh–thine had a soul,
> And that is dead. (1887: 129)

Human fragilities are emphasised in the short poem ‘Christ, The Nazarene*’* with a group of scribes gathered around a faded fresco of Christ; each project onto the image their own frailties. The question is can anyone depict Christ because no-one alive saw him and so are we not all guilty of doing the same as the scribes? An accurate likeness cannot be recreated because we cannot be sure that we have not projected our own sensibilities onto his putative teaching:

> And every copyist of the crowd
> With his own soul that face endowed,

Gentle, severe, majestic, mean;
But which was Christ, the Nazarene? (1887: 130)

Given Naden's immersion in philosophy and theology she must have been aware that the principle of projection is one the key tenets of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (1841).[25] He argues that religion is the result of our projecting human consciousness onto objects (in this case the fresco in 'Christ, The Nazarene') and so endowing them as sacred:

> The essence of religion is the immediate, involuntary, unconscious contemplation of the human nature as another, a distinct nature. But when this projected image of human nature is made an object of reflection, of theology, it becomes an inexhaustible mine of falsehoods, illusions, contradictions, and sophisms. (Feuerbach 1854: 211-2)

Feuerbach believes that it is only when we learn to peer behind our projections that we will understand consciousness and the source of human nature. In turn this will lead to an understanding of how the natural world acts on and shapes the human mind, rather than the supernatural.

All the poems in this section have, as a common thread, an examination of how science and religion engage through nature. Through such an examination Naden searches for answers as to how we can then seek harmony with nature. In the next section I examine how Naden considers that such harmony can work through love and sexual selection.

Sexual Selection

The concluding poem of the three long and technically accomplished poems in *A Modern Apostle etc.* is 'The Story of Clarice'. It is primarily a story about the cold and detached Clarice's initial rejection but eventual acceptance of the passionate writer, Wilfred. This love story, between two seemingly mismatched individuals, has sexual selection as its dominant motif, albeit a subtle one. Throughout its three sections and almost four hundred lines, my analysis illustrates Naden's personality often emerging through the character of

[25] The first edition published in Great Britain by John Chapman was a translation by Marian Evans (George Eliot) in 1854. It is this edition to which I refer here.

Clarice. Like Naden, Clarice's mother is dead and she struggles to find true friendship; her physical appearance corresponds closely to Naden's as does her intellectual talents. Religion is largely absent in Clarice's life and she seeks solace in nature which are traits that we see in the adult Naden. The plot does not, however, bear sufficiently close comparison to what is known of Naden's life for it to be confirmed as truly autobiographical. Some characters seem to represent conflations of the various men in Naden's life. For example, the father resembles her own father, Thomas; the reference to Clarice being twenty without her father knowing her age could be a reference to Naden's own father's extended absences from home; this would explain Naden's closeness to her grandparents (Hughes 1890: 6). The following description has shades of Thomas, Darwin, Spencer and Lewins all wrapped up in the character of Clarice's father:

> Like a wise pedlar, vending where he can
> A ribbon, a gilt pin, a crystal bead,
> That yellow, smoke-dried, literary man
> Wrote books that all might quote, though none would read:
> He raked the dust-heaps of the Court of France,
> And left his daughter to herself–and Chance. (1887: 99)

The line: 'Wrote books that all might quote, though none would read:' seems to be a reference to either the *Origin* or the *Descent* which were, of course, widely quoted but, as Gillian Beer has pointed out, not necessarily read. The characterisation of Clarice provides a unique insight into how Naden saw herself in the latter stages of her short life. For example, in stanza four Clarice is compared with Athene[26] minus her armour. Athene is an unusual choice of feminine archetype but she was logical, intelligent and an idealist – all traits it is possible to detect in Naden, herself.[27] This is unpromising material for a poem about sexual selection and yet surely this is the point. Naden believed that sexual selection

[26] Goddess of reason, intelligence, arts and literature who taught Telemachus humility.
[27] The Goddess also had no mother because after Zeus had impregnated Metis he swallowed her and Athene was born out of the head of Zeus. Athene had a reputation for being chaste and not an advocate of sexuality, having no lovers or children.

amongst the human species was fraught with complexities and she delights in exploring these. Having compared Clarice's mental traits to such an imposing mythological figure, Naden's physical description of her subject also bears some resemblance to her own appearance:

> Grave was her mouth, and yet was formed for smiles;
> Pale were her cheeks–how lovely, had they blushed!
> No sweet gay looks were hers, no girlish wiles:
> Not that her woman's instincts had been crushed;
> But, like azaleas in a darkened room,
> They had not air and light enough to bloom. (1887: 100)

Her close friend Madeline Daniell recognises Naden's sense of gravity and serene femininity: 'Hers was a face which would lend itself well to reproduction in marble; it was so calm and still, and the elevation of expression natural to her is best pourtrayed [sic] and preserved in the unchanging stone' (1890: viii). The reference to azaleas and their likely intended meaning here, of fragile passion being stifled by the bookish air surrounding her, does seem to resemble Naden at around twenty years of age. Rejection of the theory of sexual selection is hinted at in stanza six as Naden playfully muses on the nature of Chance (capital C) in Clarice's life which she sees as representing an absence of divinity rather than proof of it. In Christian monotheism Divinity is the power that emanates from God but Naden is setting up an alternative view by presenting it as part of the natural world. Whether religiously inspired or simply part of the natural world Chance delivers a love interest to Clarice in the form of Wilfred, a secretary to her father. The association of Clarice's '…guileless heart and book-learn'd brain' (1887: 100) and Wilfred who has a poet's soul represents both parts of Naden's own personality:

> His mind was all o'ergrown with metaphor,
> With tropes that simulate and stifle thought; (1887: 101)

These lines are illuminating because by this stage of Naden's life she was pursuing philosophy to the detriment of her poetry. Such philosophy in its material and monistic

outlook sought to foreground the natural world whilst also encompass learning from classical mythology and modern science, as we read in stanza eleven:

> She knew the woes of Dido; she could tell
> How Helen set the towers of Troy ablaze:
> She thought of Love as a forgotten spell,
> Potent in far-off lands, in ancient days;
> Obsolete now, like Magic black and white,
> Or the Emission Theory of Light. (1887: 101)

Wilfred has been smitten but Clarice, unpractised in such matters and unable to detect the physical signs of attraction, is oblivious. Through books she can read about sexual selection but understanding such complexities is described through the metaphor of beautiful but unintelligible birdsong:

> So calm, so child-like, and so marble-cold,
> She did not know he loved her, nor had skill
> To read in looks what no sweet words had told:
> Though tales of love her spirit oft could reach
> Like distant warblings in a foreign speech. (1887: 101)

An important philosopher of the natural world for Naden is Arthur Schopenhauer and it is following Clarice's plea for Wilfred to read an extract aloud that he is emboldened to make his declaration of love which is immediately rejected. Wilfred exemplifies Schopenhauer's *Wille zum Leben* or internal force known as the Will to Life. Schopenhauer posits that we might think that our minds rule our bodies but in fact the opposite is true because what we possess is an intrinsic desire to survive and to procreate. This means that even Clarice eventually must succumb to those desires. Such inherent natural behaviour ensures that we seek out those who we think will provide the best match to produce the next generation; the issue is whether we do this consciously or subconsciously. In the *Descent,* Darwin describes this in terms of love but it is also the driver for sexual selection and procreation:

> for, as the German philosopher Schopenhauer remarks, "the final aim of all love intrigues, be they comic and tragic, is really of more importance than all other ends in human life. What it all turns upon is nothing less than the composition of the next

> generation … It is not the weal or woe of any one individual, but that of the human race to come, which is here at stake." (1882: 586)[28]

Sandra Shapshay sees this in the wider context of human suffering and argues that therein lies the source of the pessimism of Schopenhauer:

> Grounding his proto-Darwinian philosophy of nature in his metaphysics and the empirical sciences of his day, Schopenhauer viewed nature as an arena where living beings compete to survive and procreate, where species adapt to environmental conditions, and, most emphasized by Schopenhauer, where sentient beings *suffer* as virtual slaves to their will to life [*Wille zum Leben*]. (Shapsay 2012: online)

Whether Wilfred's realisation of his love for Clarice is because of an empathy with the views of Schopenhauer, as Shapshay describes, is unclear. What stanza sixteen does reveal is the return to the Faith, Hope and Love motif of the previous two long poems. Wilfred does not have Faith but he does now have Hope and Love whereas in her cold rejection of him Clarice has neither Faith, Hope nor Love. At the end of the section the spurned Wilfred takes out his frustration on nature and the philosopher:

> And switch with savage cane the wayside flower,
> And curse himself, and Fate, and Schopenhauer. (1887: 103)

At the beginning of section two Clarice is experiencing the first pangs of Schopenhauer's Will in terms of sexual desire but the narrator, and one suspects the voice of Naden herself here, has a barbed warning for all:

> And she was sad for *him*–not knowing yet
> How lightly men can love, how soon forget. (1887: 104)

Schopenhauer sees man in the natural world as slaves to human desires and impossible to completely satisfy. The Will (including such feelings as sexual desire) frequently triumphs over reason but the pessimistic notion is that these feelings once satiated return after a short time and consequently we are never completely content and must forever continue fulfilling our human needs.

[28] This quotation does not appear in *The Descent of Man* (1871) but was included by Darwin in the 1882 revised edition that I cite here.

The connection of the natural world and the human in stanza three of section two reveals more inherent complexities of sexual selection. Clarice continues to reflect upon her feelings and especially the notion that a woman may begin by taking pity on a man but will eventually love him. For Clarice, this is not logical and pity cannot be the basis for love and the emerging sexual tension is amusing in a shy affected way as the young inexperienced woman ponders her future:

> A stirring as of springtide he had wrought
> In that fair breast which yet he could not win;
> She pitied, and she wondered, and she thought:
> They say that Pity is to Love akin–
> Agreed–with one important reservation–
> She is at best a very poor relation. (1887: 104)

In the exploration of sexual selection in stanza four Clarice muses further on the nature of love. She has no experience of how to balance reason and love in a harmonious relationship. In looking for philosophical answers, Naden considers Aristotle and his famous lines: 'For one swallow does not make a summer, nor one day. Neither does one day or a short time make someone blessed' (Polansky 2014: 28). Naden does not entirely accept Aristotle, though, since she suggests that it is true that the first swallow is not an indicator of the joy to come but he is a persistent and frequent visitor and ultimately it is this that signifies the joy of the natural world. Clarice cannot seek comfort, or indeed answers to her conundrum from her father, because of their continuing cold and humourless relationship; her mother has died and she is friendless. Her education has also provided scant comfort or advice and religion is completely absent in her life. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that a Schopenhauerian pessimism seeps into Clarice's reflections through the story of the doomed choices of the Naiad, Daphne, who changed into a tree to escape Apollo; or Dido's suicide in the face of Aeneas's departure, despite her reputed strength of character. She reflects on other love stories from English literary classics but

none of them seem to offer her any real guidance.[29] Clarice returns to her life governed by reason but lacking Schopenhauerian ideas about intimacy and she attempts to convince herself that this is in some way natural. But, as Schopenhauer states, the Will shall eventually dominate and her feelings begin to return for Wilfred and they are exacerbated by her seeing the oafish (Cloten-like) successor to Wilfred.[30] Clarice has never read a novel because of her devotion to poetry, until Wilfred's book arrives by post. As she reads it the natural world is foregrounded, as Naden reimagines Schopenhauer's Will of sexual selection in her invigoration of Clarice's emerging passion:

> Now, her heart sprang to meet some bright-clad thought;
> For thoughts there were, rich ears of harvest-gold,
> Not choked with tares and poppies, as of old. (1887: 108)

When an elderly and bookish man arrives, and advises Clarice of the book's success, his news of Wilfred's illness seems to fully awaken the dormant passions within Clarice:

> …she saw the sun grow dim,
> And like the fluttering of imprisoned birds
> She felt wild pulses throb in every limb: (1887: 109)

In the final stanza of section two, Clarice considers the attraction of a love between two people that will not be denied and that will live on eternally. She has begun to understand this through the pages of Wilfred's book and she now tries to reconcile love and learning through the pages of books, with Schopenhauer's sexual Will now understood.

The third section looks forward to the rapprochement between Clarice and Wilfred. Before her arrival, the narrator reprises the couplet from stanza one of section two, but he injects a note of optimism by reflecting that some men may be constant in their affections:

> "How lightly men can love, how soon forget!"

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[29] Naden uses the examples of Spenser's Una in *The Faerie Queen* (a Knight's wife who is beautiful but modest but also strong when the situation demanded and represents truth); the vicissitudes of the affair between Sir Scudamore and Amoret; Shakespeare's Imogen who, in *Cymbeline*, is clever and beautiful and marries Posthumus for love rather than accepting her father's choice of Cloten who was an oaf; or the tragic Juliet who appears motivated by sexual attraction towards Romeo.

[30] Naden returns to this aspect of sexual selection with comic effect in 'Evolutional Erotics' when Chloe is attracted to the physicality of a brute rather than the mind of the archaeologist.

I said–yet some there be not false or fickle: (1887: 111)

Naden's classical imagery of deadly arrows such as the one sent by Apollo to kill Tiresias or the poisoned arrows of Hecate, are contrasted with Cupid's arrow that has wounded (but not fatally) Wilfred. His love has been the source of his creative act of writing his novel that has won over Clarice. Before she arrives, the secular stanzas seven and eight confer god-like status (small g) on the creative act. When Clarice finally arrives to see Wilfred, Naden maintains the classical symbolism without any recourse to religion, but this time coupled with a newly emerging sexual energy from Clarice:

Then all the wifehood and the motherhood
That in her virgin heart close-hidden lay
Sprang forth; the voice of her quick-pulsing blood
Rebuked her coming, and yet murmured "Stay!"
She stood there an Olympian goddess mute
And blushing, with soft eyes irresolute. (1887: 114)

Clarice wavers between rosy-cheeked and lily-cheeked as she is nervously unsure how to handle Wilfred's passion but she succumbs when he reimagines Schopenhauer's Will and the need for fulfilment in ways she had not yet dared to imagine. Clarice is released from her inhibitions and the release of sexual tension is obvious:

She blushed at his remembrance of that page
In Schopenhauer–"Ah forgive!" she cried–
"I was a tame-bred goldfinch in its cage,
Not knowing that the world is all outside;
Yet such poor birds will beat the bars, and sing
Of hope, and build an idle nest in Spring." (1887: 115)

Clarice is now part of classical mythology, in Wilfred's eyes, in the melding of art and love and in the invocation of Egeria – a minor goddess:[31]

"Yet nay," he smiled, "you are Olympian-born,
You are Egeria's self, the nymph who blest
Rome's king with laws from Heaven: that gloomy morn
When I arose from nightmare-laden rest
A banished man, you sent your sprite divine,

[31] An accepted story of Egeria is it that she was either wife, lover or, at the very least, an advisor to Numa Pompilius; a Sabine who became the second king of Rome. Egeria is famous for her understanding of how to worship the gods and her instruction of the king in such important matters.

That pitying led me to the fountain-shrine." (1887: 115)

This curious analogy of a goddess from Roman mythology and the chaste Clarice seems to have its essence in Egeria becoming a water nymph after the king's death. Whereas Tiresias was killed for drinking from a tainted stream, Wilfred has in fact been reborn, not through baptism, but by emerging from the self-pitying of his rejection to worshiping his goddess as a fountain of creativity and love. The final two stanzas are a glorious invocation of that love and with nature now in harmony:

> That night she dreamed that over fertile ground
> And blossomed herbage the two lovers trod;
> The air was filled with an Æolian sound
> That sang of secret life beneath the sod,
> And all pure fragrances of flower and fruit
> Lived in the music of that fitful lute.
>
> Of couching flocks it chanted; of the bird
> Nested in shade; of all things that have breath;
> Of human fate; and still entranced they heard,
> And knew the harmonies of Birth and Death:
> Till downward flowed the dream, and bore her deep
> Into the dark unhaunted caves of Sleep. (1887: 116)

Clarice is liberated now from the constraints imposed by her upbringing, illustrating the power of the human mind, imagination and love when unshackled from pure reason. As with the many illusions to classical mythology, it is by escaping our reason and delving into our imagination, unconstrained by religious ideology perhaps, that leads us to the fulfilment of our passions and harmony with nature.

In 'Love's Mirror' Naden considers the nature of sexual love in a society where women can be isolated, like Clarice, but in this case through being objectified by the patriarchy. This is exemplified in the mirror's dual role of reflecting both the idealised image to the man and the real image to the woman. The woman pleads to her would-be lover not to objectify her as some paean to perfection, but to let the mirror reflect her true self back to him. The logic, honesty and rational behaviour of the woman is endearing

especially in the absence of the male voice whom we are perhaps meant to judge harshly by his absence. Marion Thain sees the woman as trapped by such an unrealistic image and argues that ultimately, in her acceptance of her lover's idealisation, she has succumbed to male fantasy: 'The woman speaker is ultimately colonised by masculine values and believes that the solution to the discrepancy which exists between herself and the image which her lover worships is for her to try and become that impossibly "glorious vision"' (1998b: 29). Whilst I accept the premise of Thain's reading, I think that Naden's use of classical mythology throughout her poetry creates a space for the use of such idealisation in a more positive way. The woman has pleaded for an end to the objectification but she also allows for the essence of the goddess to remain such that, for the woman's part, she will use it as a means for self-improvement:

> Then keep her in your heart of hearts,
> And let me look upon her face,
> And learn of that transcendent grace,
> Till all my meaner self departs, (1887: 126)

Furthermore, her enduring love for her suitor exemplifies a union in nature that is physical love and an idealised vision of its potential through one's imagination:

> And, while I love you more and more,
> My spirit, gazing on the light,
> Becomes, in loveliness and might,
> The glorious Vision you adore. (1887: 127)

What often appeared to the late Victorians as the potential absurdity of sexual selection is revealed in a group of four poems that satirise sexual selection, desire, love and science. 'Evolutional Erotics' is the title framing four evolutionary poems, 'Scientific Wooing', 'The New Orthodoxy', 'Natural Selection' and 'Solomon Redivivus, 1886'. Naden published them as a group, and so I will consider them within a single interpretive framework. 'Erotics' normally suggests sexual desire but Naden uses it as part of an evolutionary narrative. Darwin devoted one small section in Chapter IV of the *Origin* to

sexual desire and sexual selection. In the *Descent*, however, he devoted seventy pages to sexual selection in the context of human evolution. Darwin's recurring idea was that natural selection was an inevitable outcome of the struggle for survival and the corollary was that sexual selection was an essential element in the struggle to reproduce. In a similar way that natural selection was contested, the Victorians did not readily absorb the ideas behind sexual selection and it was not a theory that was widely accepted during Darwin's lifetime or indeed until the twentieth century. As I discussed in 'Sexual Selection' (pp.44-58), Naden satirises the potential absurdities of Darwinian sexual selection by comparing human and animal behaviour and its physical displays of masculine allure, potency or shows of physical aggression to drive away potential rivals. By contrast, the female in human sexual selection was, for Darwin, characterised by her passivity, whereas in the animal world the female, in choosing the most powerful mate, often displays an active choice and is far from passive.

In 'Scientific Wooing', a scientific youth falls for a woman and sets about plotting to woo her. If the animal kingdom, for Darwin, was about male displays of attractiveness, potency or sheer physical power, the human kingdom is far more subtly arranged. The poem presents a dichotomy of male mental power versus softer female physical attributes, in what could be read as a motif of late Victorian patriarchy. Yet something more intriguing is at play here, with Naden's nexus of the competing forces of logic, desire and love serving to satirise the nature of sexual selection and the choices demanded by it from both sexes. In attributing to the male narrator pompous scientific language, Naden suggests that science is such a part of language that, for this youth, it is part of the natural order:

> I was a youth of studious mind,
> Fair Science was my mistress kind,
> And held me with attraction chemic;
> No germs of Love attacked my heart,
> Secured as by Pasteurian art
> Against that fatal epidemic. (1887: 135)

Such language is not only imbued with science but science is itself anthropomorphised in the form of the youth's mistress. The first three stanzas are an overflowing of scientific discourse as Naden mischievously allows us to think that scientific wooing is merely a student's mental courtship with his subject matter and not physical wooing. This is humorous enough but the real purpose of the poem is to satirise the theory of sexual selection and desire. Stanza four introduces us to the fact that it is not now science that he is intending to woo but a woman called Mary Maud Trevylyan. The sexual element is clear, as he is attracted 'By hazel eyes and lips vermilion!' (1887: 136) as Naden suggests that human male sexual choice prioritises beauty rather than intelligence. Furthermore, Naden subtly distances science from religion by choosing to use the classical idiom 'Ye gods!' (1887: 136), which does not have any overtly traditional blasphemous overtones. Naden gives the poem some additional distance and extra frisson in stanza twelve; when the narrator fantasises about Mary's submission to him Naden has her cry '*Peccavi*!' (1887: 138) that, in Latin, means 'I have sinned'. Stanza five uses quasi-religious language as a precursor to the youth admitting that he is renouncing his agnosticism in favour of Love and Beauty – qualities that Naden appears to be equating with religion:

> Yet nay! the sacrilegious prayer
> Was not mine own, oh fairest fair!
> Thee, dear one, will I ever cherish;
> Thy worshipped image shall remain
> In the grey thought-cells of my brain
> Until their form and function perish. (1887: 136)

Naden uses an *aabccb* rhyme scheme and throughout the fourteen six line stanzas she uses spondees such as 'Yet nay!' to highlight the narrator's deliberately overblown language. This exposes his academic pretensions and the patriarchal assumption that, once he has displayed his academic credentials (effectively his 'plumage'), Mary will be won over. The exaggerated pomposity of the language and the speaker's fantasising of Mary, who he has already acknowledged to be cold and distant towards him, suggests that he never achieves

his aim and that his scientific wooing is no more than a fantasy. Indeed, Mary is clearly superior to him in some way:

> She's never kind, she's never coy,
> She treats me simply as a boy,
> And asks me how I like my classes! (1887: 136)

Whether this means that she is older or more learned is unclear but there is a suggestion in stanza eight that she possesses a 'golden dower.' The rest of the poem becomes a male fantasy of how he might win the female in a game of sexual selection: 'I lure the maid to sweet communion?' (1887: 137) and how he might eventually triumph as her feminine nature is finally overcome:

> Or Mathematically true
> With rigorous Logic will I woo,
> And not a word I'll say at random;
> Till urged by Syllogistic stress,
> She falter forth a tearful "Yes,"
> A sweet "*Quod erat demonstrandum*!" (1887: 138)

Naden's overall intention in 'Scientific Wooing' is elusive but she is clearly scornful of the male's superficially misguided belief that his intellect will win over Mary. This expectation appears to be the source of the poem's critique not only of sexual selection but of Victorian patriarchy. Society seems to foreground academic aspiration in the male, whilst relegating the female to the role of Muse, which can only lead to shallow and unsuccessful congress. Naden is searching for a nexus where love, learning, science, religion, philosophy and poetry can evolve into a new equitable society. The male narrator is clearly not the kind of male that Naden views as being up to the task.

Naden inverts these roles in an epistolary poem 'The New Orthodoxy'. Amy Merton, a student at one of the first all-women colleges (Girton) writes to her former lover Fred, an heir to a peerage, studying at Oxford. Their union has been prevented by Sir Frederick but young Fred still loves Amy and wants them to be married. The first half of this eight-stanza poem sets up the tension that the union has been prevented because Sir Frederick

clearly does not want a 'bluestocking' as a wife for his son. There is a suggestion that religion could play a part, given the objections to science. The implication here, something that was commonly believed in the late Victorian period, was that somehow a woman's femininity was compromised by an education. Fred clearly is intimidated by Amy's education. In stanza two, however, Amy seems to acknowledge what was generally believed during Naden's adulthood, that a degree for a woman was of little value apart from a teaching career, as Jane Robinson analyses:

> Of the 335 who got degree certificates from Girton during the same period [between 1871 and 1893], 123 (37 percent) taught, only 45 married, two were missionaries, six were employed by the government, four did medical work, and six were dead. The rest presumably did nothing. (2009: 203-4)

Robinson's sombre comments can be lightened somewhat by an acknowledgement that Darwin had supported women's education in various ways.[32] This still did not prevent him from believing women to be intellectually inferior, however, which seems to be the inference from Sir Frederick's own attitude. Naden did not take a degree at Mason College and she could have chosen a career ahead of marriage if that was what she had wanted. As a woman of independent means, she was free to make that choice.

Amy, like Naden, is not a passive angel of the house waiting for her man to come home. She is a strong character who, unlike the male narrator of 'Scientific Wooing', seeks to build a relationship built on compromise rather than purely impressive scientific credentials. She does at times, of course, use highly scientific language but the masculine pomposity in 'Scientific Wooing' is replaced by feminine teasing and levity. As well as being intimidated by Amy's education it appears that Fred wants a compliant and passive partner. Amy is clearly not that kind of person and so initially she diminishes the impact of her studies by denigrating her hard-won academic achievements. The second half of the

[32] For supporting evidence for this statement please see the following url as part of the *Darwin Correspondence Project* analysing Darwin's letters to around 150 women who he not only encouraged but often used to help him with his research: http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/darwins-women

poem, however, sees Amy asserting herself as she dissects his dismissal of leading freethinkers such as Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, Bain, Darwin and Spencer. Stanza six delivers a strong assertion of belief in evolutionary theory from Amy:

> Things with fin, and claw, and hoof
> Join to give us perfect proof
> That our being's warp and woof
> We from near and far win; (1887: 141)

Fred does not wholeheartedly embrace Darwinism and amusingly he is persuaded against it, not by logic, but by the need to appease an elderly spinster aunt. The example of the unmarried Fred and his aunt both refusing to accept the new orthodoxy is ironic and cutting:

> Yet your flippant doubts you vaunt,
> And–to please a maiden aunt–
> You've been heard to say you can't
> Pin your faith to Darwin! (1887: 141)

The hapless Fred has scoffed at Laplace's nebular theory but he loses Amy's respect completely by criticising Herbert Spencer. Amy has borne his criticism of Darwin and Laplace with sardonic grace but the attack on Spencer, a colossus of this period in philosophical terms, and someone who, by now, Naden champions above everyone else, seriously endangers their future relationship. The final stanza ends with a gentle but firm ultimatum from Amy (who is still prepared to love Fred) in offering an olive branch to her foolish and intransigent religious suitor:

> Write–or telegraph–or call!
> Come yourself and tell me all:
> No fond hope shall me enthrall,
> No regret shall sway me:
> Yet–until the worst is said,
> Till I know your faith is dead,
> I remain, dear doubting Fred,
> Your believing
> AMY. (1887: 141)

Amy is neither prepared to be a slave nor is she willing to regret her choices. She remains firm in her assertion that it is Fred's faith that is the barrier to their future love. He is the doubter of the new orthodoxy and not Amy, who is certain of her scientific beliefs.

In 'Natural Selection,' Naden creates a preposterous situation in which an archaeologist believes that the discovery of some ancient primate bones in a cave would be a welcome gift to his potential love interest. The situation becomes even more comical in Chloe's apparent and, ostensibly risible assertion, that this invasion of a burial site can somehow be taken as a sign of insincerity in love. The archaeologist's response, that her concern for ancient ancestors makes her even more attractive to him, mocks both the narrator and the situation:

> But he ne'er could be true, she averred,
> Who would dig up an ancestor's grave–
> And I loved her the more when I heard
> Such filial regard for the Cave. (1887: 142)

Despite the poem's title, 'Natural Selection', its eight quatrains and simple *abab* rhyme scheme turns half way through on the notion of sexual selection. Having shown such concern for ancient primates, Chloe is then seduced by a brawny male. He is clearly the opposite of the archaeologist, lacking in intelligence, but physically fit and adept in the arts such as singing and dancing. Naden sets up the competition between science (mind) and arts (beauty) juxtaposed with comical reflections of the Darwinian notion of sexual selection. Chloe's head is turned by physical potency rather than academic pretensions:

> But there comes an idealess lad,
> With a strut, and a stare, and a smirk;
> And I watch, scientific though sad,
> The Law of Selection at work. (1887: 143)

In stanza seven, Naden contrasts animal and human nature. She does this by a comparison of the human situation to the bird kingdom where sexual selection is dictated by female choice based upon male plumage, attractiveness and displays of potency. In primates, some

vestiges of this behaviour remain. This is complicated, however, by other forms of selection, where the males compete and the winner gains access to the females. Clearly, Naden is arguing that physical attractiveness is to some degree fundamental to the complex laws surrounding sexual selection. In the poem's comic interplay of the sexual choices that need to be made Naden seems to be suggesting that it is Chloe who is making the choice, in a society where it was believed by many men, including Darwin himself, that the choice was theirs. Beer summarises Darwinian sexual selection in this way:

> Despite his [Darwin's] suggestion in this passage that 'in civilised nations women have free or almost free choice', he makes it explicit elsewhere throughout *The Descent* that, in contrast to all other species (where the *female* most commonly holds the power of selection), among humankind the male dominates the choice. This reversal creates crucial difficulties: 'Man is more powerful in body and mind than a woman, and in the savage state he keeps her in a far more abject state of bondage than does the male of any other animal: therefore it is not surprising that he should have gained the power of selection' (911). Again, though he pays homage to the 'mental charms' of women, he gives primacy to beauty: even the chapter in which these words appear is subtitled 'On the effects of the continued selection of women according to a different standard of beauty in each race'. (2000: 197)

Did Naden fear that Darwinian sexual selection was an instrument of oppression by the patriarchy, that Beer alludes to above, or was she simply concerned that women should be prepared to make their own choices? Chloe seems a match for the archaeologist, in spirit if not academically, and it is she who makes the choice in not selecting him. Ultimately, whether she selects the 'idealess lad' or he has selected her is left deliberately ambiguous. Clearly, it is a good match and it is, perhaps, Naden's attempt to show that when females make the choice, as in the animal kingdom, then it can be successful; not only in the individual relationship but in evolutionary terms too. This notion of female choice having a positive effect on evolution was challenged by many scientists, including the Catholic St. George Jackson Mivart. Levine comments that: '[Mivart's] religious and political positions were obviously to the right of Darwin's and who talked of 'vicious feminine caprice' that made the idea of female choice helping establish permanent evolutionary changes absurd

to him' (2003: 43). Levine is alluding here to Mivart's *On the Genesis of Species* (1871) that critiqued the notion of female choice in humans. Mivart cited the example of birds, where he questioned the idea that a female bird would jeopardise her own life or allow her choice to be influenced by small differences in plumage colour (1871: 55). This could have offered the archaeologist some comfort. His rueful response, though, suggests an acceptance of the Darwinian view that generally primates were sexually selected naturally based upon their physical ability to ward off other males; or that the females exercised choice in selecting the males, based on this ability too. The ending of the poem shows the archaeologist bitterly reflecting upon the fact that his intellect has lost out to physicality:

> Shall I rage as they whirl in the valse?
> Shall I sneer as they carol and coo?
> Ah no! for since Chloe is false,
> I'm certain that Darwin is true! (1887: 143)

'Solomon Redivivus, 1886'[33] is the fourth and final poem of 'Evolutionary Erotics'. Andrea Kaston Tange describes the poem as one which 'recasts the relationship between Solomon and Sheba in an evolutionary metaphor' (2006: 219). Tange means that the poem's omniscient narrator Solomon is brought into the Victorian age by confidently claiming for himself the powers of foresight, scholarship, commerce and poetry and showing that the spirit of the age is grounded in evolutionary history:

> WHAT am I? Ah, you know it,
> I am the modern Sage,
> Seer, savant, merchant, poet–
> I am, in brief, the Age. (1887: 144)

Throughout its sixteen quatrains a simple and uniform *abab* rhyme scheme is underpinned by the spondees that commence every other line. This gives a certainty and a predictability to the rhythm rather like the oscillations of the circadian rhythms of the natural world.

[33] Solomon is a name traditionally associated with wisdom and redivivus means brought back to life or living again; the year probably marks the time of its composition.

This is a poem of evolution, as John Holmes remarks: 'a self-appointed 'modern sage' (l.2) attempts to charm his very own Queen of Sheba by telling her the story of their shared evolutionary history, from when they first split apart as amoebae to their reunion as human beings' (2009: 191). When the Queen of Sheba visits King Solomon she comes 'to test Solomon with hard questions' (1 Kings 10: 1) and ends up being converted to his great wisdom: 'in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard' (1 Kings 10: 7). Sheba's original scepticism is maintained until she is presented with evidence of Solomon's great wisdom (and wealth). Naden playfully reimagines the biblical king, the son of David, as a modern purveyor of great wisdom and as a post-Darwinian, telling an evolutionary tale. Evolutionary theory certainly has pre-Socratic roots back to both Anaximander (610-546 BCE) and Empedocles (490-430 BCE) and if we accept that the first atheist was Diagoras of Melos who was also from the fifth century BCE, these post-date King Solomon by several hundred years. They did not *pre-date* King Solomon, however, since he reigned from 970-931 BCE. The idea of King Solomon being a pre-Socratic evolutionist, even an early theist, was irreligious even in late Victorian society. Naden, therefore, associates the great wisdom of Solomon with a modern seer and savant from 1886, juxtaposing this biblical era of expansion in trade with the Victorian industrial expansion; this is still irreligious but in a more veiled manner. The narrator traces, therefore, an evolutionary lineage from amoeba, sea squirts, fish, reptiles, mammals, primates, and a final descent to human civilisation symbolised by the reigns of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. The discovery of single-celled amoeba or reproduction through cell division or binary fission were all eighteenth-century discoveries; the connection of two biblical figures with a theory that had such a profound effect on late-nineteenth century religion is mischievous to say the least.

The recasting of the King Solomon and Queen of Sheba biblical story as a Darwinian tale is both playful and deliberately unsettling. Levine explains the general principle at work here: '[Darwin's theory] is aimed in part at disrupting the natural theological understanding of organisms, that they were intentionally designed and directly adapted to their positions in the world' (2003: 44). Levine's point about Darwin's *modus operandi* was taken even further by Naden. By imagining Solomon reborn or brought back to life in 1886, with his wisdom meaning far more than his vast wealth, Naden can casually relate the story of evolution from amoeba to man while eliding ancient biblical perceived wisdom and insight with scientific discovery. She skilfully navigates around the obvious fact that if a nineteenth century Solomon possessed this wise knowledge then presumably he would either question the existence of God or at least question his role in the universe. She is arguing boldly and radically that Solomon in 1886 would have been a Darwinian evolutionist and an agnostic.

Sonnets

Naden's sonnet section in *A Modern Apostle etc.* is considerably shorter at eleven poems than the thirty-five sonnets in *Songs and Sonnets* but they are mainly confident assertions of science and philosophy. Two of the sonnets, 'Prometheus and Pandora' and 'Hercules', see Naden returning to her love of classical mythology. In her re-telling of the stories, she draws out the qualities that the principal characters require to succeed and re-emphasises her own qualities of self-discipline and stoicism. These qualities are evident in 'Heloise', in which Naden briefly returns to religion, as well as in 'Recompense' which is a mischievous look at someone trying to get into heaven but then finding it may be a form of hell. Three sonnets use dreams to consider the notion of love. In 'The Pessimist's Vision' the narrator's dream of a modern hell is not the biblical furnace beneath the earth but a dystopian world of disease and pestilence in a naturalistic setting. A demon bars entry

accusing the narrator of a 'lust for pain'. Lust suggests a strong desire with the inference that we seek out pain rather than Darwinian attempts at avoidance. If pain can intensify feelings of love, then the Demon disavows any such notion. In this modern hell, the creatures marry for hate, rather than any notions of sexual selection, and so the stark message is to be content with human society. In 'The Gift' an Angel, 'Almoner of love' (1887: 158) brings charmed gifts such as providential weather for the crops. In accepting love and the pain that it can bring the rejection of the pursuit of pain in 'The Pessimist's Vision' suggests that to love and yet to be aware of the presence of pain allows us to live in the moment and is a Darwinian survival instinct.

It is the assured visions of science and philosophy that are most important in four sonnets that are all essential parts of the Naden *oeuvre*. In 'Science and Philosophy', 'Poet and Botanist', 'The Double Rainbow' and 'The Nebular Theory', Naden confidently asserts her scientific and philosophical beliefs that seem, by this stage, to be reconciled with her earlier religious upbringing. In 'Science and Philosophy' scientists and philosophers are searching for a replacement to religion. Naden posits that humankind is in a sense being diminished by, so far, going without a 'nobler creed' (1887: 161). In this search, Naden appears to criticise the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist by contrasting its symbols of 'bread and wine' with 'the living bread and wine of thought,' in other words, philosophy:

> WE went a-begging for a nobler creed,
> We craved the living bread and wine of thought,
> That Eucharist which is not sold or bought,
> But freely given; yet, did any heed,
> 'Twas but to offer pence, or bid us feed
> From empty sacramental vessels, wrought
> Of gold or brass; we spent our prayers for nought,
> Faint and athirst with spiritual need. (1887: 161)

For the same reasons I have given above, Naden may be specifically criticisng the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist whereby the bread and wine are believed to

become transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. The Anglican Tractarian movement had retained the notion of the Catholic sacrament surrounding the Real Presence. It allowed for individual faith, though, to decide the extent of that Presence; so, Naden may be offering a more general contrast between faith and a positivist philosophy. Given her Baptist upbringing, however, Naden could be recalling the tradition amongst Baptists that does not recognise the Eucharist as a sacrament. They prefer instead to see it as a remembrance of Christ's suffering, sacrifice and eventual reconciliation between God and mankind. Whichever meaning Naden intended, her juxtaposition of the sacrament with science and philosophy is intended to suggest that it is religion that is empty and unfulfilling and the sestet reinforces this view:

> Then some brought grapes, and some brought corn and
> yeast,
> Plenteous and good; yet still we murmured, "Give!
> This is scant fare when thirst and hunger cry:
> Teach us to change our garner to a feast,
> Preparing food by which the mind may live,
> Perennial loaves, and flagons never dry." (1887: 161)

The 'scant fare' recalls the 'Scant fare for wife and child the fisher gains' (1881: 4) from 'The Astronomer' or the starving crowd's angry reaction to Alan's preaching in 'A Modern Apostle'. Instead of garnering 'scant fare' we must feast on science and philosophy for the means 'by which the mind may live' (1887: 161) forever nourishing people through scientific progress and philosophical evolution. Religion, at this stage in Naden's thinking, must be fully accepting of the intellectual richness of science to have any further value in human society.

The interconnectedness of a plant with a poet and a botanist who, in different ways, can help to give the plant life is the subject of the sonnet 'Poet and Botanist'. The botanical description of the plant dominates the first five lines:

> FAIR are the bells of this bright-flowering weed;
> Nectar and pollen treasuries, where grope

Innocent thieves; the Poet lets them ope
And bloom, and wither, leaving fruit and seed
To ripen; (1887: 160)

The first line is a reference to one of Naden's favourite plants, the convolvulus, a genus of bindweed, which adorns the covers of all three of her poetry collections; see Fig. 3 below from the *Complete Poetical Works* (1894). In addition, a picture that Naden painted of convolvulus has survived. It has never been published and is shown below (Fig. 4[34]):

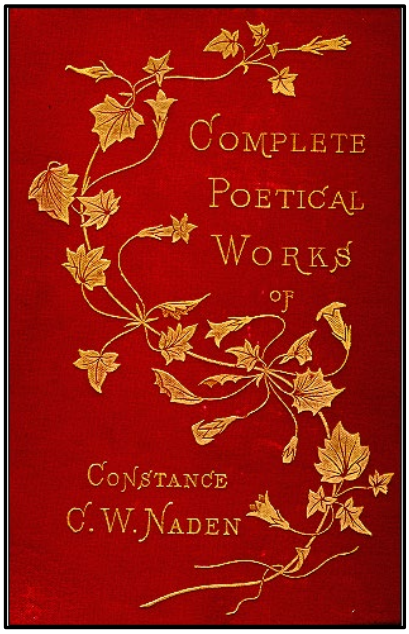

Fig. 3

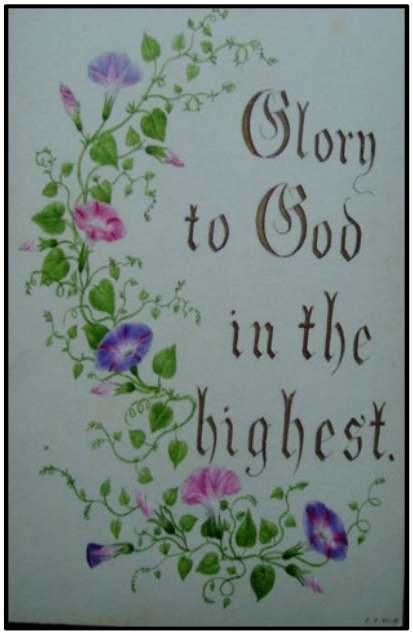

Fig. 4

The 'innocent thieves' (1887: 160) of line three recalls the pollinators, such as bees, that provide the plant with its relationship in the natural world that will lead to reproduction. This gives the plant and hence the discipline of botany its legitimacy because what Naden describes here is Darwinism. Darwin was a lifelong botanist and his plant collecting, dissecting and classifying was an ever-present feature of his life. Darwin knew that his theory of natural selection depended upon the same laws that applied to the plant kingdom. This meant that plants had to have sexes and reproduce and the key to that reproduction was the flower. The first five lines of the poem are, therefore, about reproduction that the

[34] © Sarah Rees-Porter 2017. Private collection, not to be reproduced.

poet, perhaps unwittingly, records in all its beauty and danger. Whether Darwin is the botanist in the sonnet is not revealed but the clinical dissection of the living plant that concludes the octet certainly brings him to mind. Darwin wrote six botanical books in all and Naden's botanist is working to prove that evolutionary theory also applies to the plant kingdom and that plant species are naturally selected too. If this is the case, then the botanist's intrusions can be justified in a cruel and wasteful natural world. What the botanist dissects, though, the poet describes and can be ruthless in the literary dissection of a plant as the sestet describes:

> Yet the mild Poet can be ruthless too,
> Crushing the tender leaves to work a spell
> Of love or fame; the record of the bud
> He will not seek, but only bids it tell
> *His* thoughts, and render up its deepest hue
> To tinge his verse as with his own heart's blood. (1887: 160)

Marion Thain describes how 'the poet is as destructive of the flower as is the dissecting botanist and the two are much closer in their relation with the world than might be expected' (2003: 155-156). My own reading takes Thain's analysis a stage further by arguing that the poet's destructive power, whilst existing in the imagination, is directed ultimately towards seeking an understanding of the plant and its effect on the imagination. This is not a botanist seeking a Linnaean classification of plant species through dissection. Rather, it is a poet seeking a philosophical harmony and ecological understanding with nature, through an invocation to the anthropomorphised plant, to give up its secrets and enhance the poetic imagination.

The connection of a natural phenomenon with an erotic union of human 'passions and desires' is ostensibly the subject of Naden's sonnet 'The Double Rainbow'. In fact, for Naden the rainbow is such an awe-inspiring sight that almost nothing can match its intensity:

I SAW the passions and desires of Man
   Blent in a thousand-coloured arc of light,
   A double rainbow; but so jewel-bright
The scarf of Iris had been pale and wan
Beside it: not the torrent-bows that span
   A river-fall at noon; nor birds whose flight
   Gleams ruby and gold; nor columned chrysolite
In caves enchanted; nought, since light began,

Could match its glories: but the inner arch
   With Joy and Anguish too intensely burned
For eyes that love the cloudy robes of March
And April, and calm Autumn's golden dress:
   Half-blinded, to the outer bow they turned,
Soft with remembered Grief and Happiness. (1887: 162)

In the objective world Naden believed that each mind is a distinct entity offering its own unique perspective on the world. Reality exists as many times as there are individual minds because when we view something, such as a rainbow, we see it differently; consequently, there are as many rainbows as there are minds to perceive them. The reference to Iris (the goddess of rainbows and messenger of the gods) suggests that Naden is interested in the ability Iris was reputed to have to traverse the natural world and to provide a connection between the Gods and humanity. The allusion in line four to Iris wearing a scarf is elusive but there is an erotic painting *Morpheus and Iris* by Pierre Narcisse Guerin (1811) that shows Iris with a pale blue scarf and a rainbow in the background. The painting is in Russia now but it is possible that Naden saw it in Paris when she went there in 1889. Naden's double rainbow is so bright that even a Greek goddess cannot compete and neither can any of the natural phenomena that Naden describes at the end of the octet. The sestet connects human emotional states with the double rainbow but the inner rainbow (which is always the less bright) is too bright and this leads to a reversal of emotional states. In a double rainbow the order of the colours is reversed and so Naden reverses the 'Joy and Anguish' of the inner rainbow with the 'Grief and Happiness' of the outer rainbow. These emotional states connect with descriptions of the natural phenomena in the octet to form an

intensity of light and colours that recognises the Hylo-Idealistic notion that nature reflects our own individual and unique vision.

Cosmology rather than evolution is the motif for Naden's sonnet 'The Nebular Theory'. The sonnet draws upon scientific knowledge that was, by the 1880s, moving at a rapid pace. There was confidence amongst the scientific communities that in areas such as astronomy they would begin to understand even how the Universe began. The dominant theory during Naden's time was Laplace's *Exposition Du Système Du Monde* (1796) which built on the earlier work of Swedenborg and Kant's *Universal Natural History and Theory of Heaven* (1755).[35] The first line of 'The Nebular Theory' is 'This is the genesis of Heaven and Earth' (1887: 156) and this can be contrasted with the first line of the Bible: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1: 1). Naden's delicate play on genesis (small g) leads the reader into another subtle variation on the Biblical account as she continues: 'In the beginning was a formless mist/ Of atoms isolate, void of life;' (1887: 156) compared to: 'Now the earth was formless and empty,' (Genesis 1: 2). The reference to atoms is indicative of the sonnet's objective which is to support the Nebular Hypothesis in opposition to the Creationist version. Naden's 'atoms isolate' are now seen to have a life, though it is at this point more an energy that lacks consciousness and exists in a kind energetic nothingness:

> …none wist
> Aught of its neighbour atom, nor any mirth,
> Nor woe, save its own vibrant pang of dearth; (1887: 156)

The archaic language juxtaposed with the latest cosmological theories serve to unite the ancient and the modern as they are prepared to coalesce into the formation of the universe.

[35] The nebular hypothesis broadly proposed that the universe began by dust particles coalescing into planets, following some cosmic event, and planets and stars were formed from rotating clouds of gas compressed by gravity. Laplace suggested a more intricate version of the theory and added the warming powers of our Sun as crucial to the creation of the planets.

In the Bible, we read: 'And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.' (Genesis 1: 3) but for Naden the universe now awakens, sentient and awesome, as it fizzes into life:

> Until a cosmic motion breathed and hissed
> And blazed through the black silence; atoms kissed,
> Clinging and clustering, with fierce throbs of birth, (1887: 156)

In fact, Naden seems to be equating the pain of childbirth (see 'The Birth of Pain' Introduction: 1 and Chapter Two: 126) with the birth of the universe from which eventually the earth will form. This is quite different from 'Genesis' which starts with the creation of heaven and earth. This nascent fiery universe is its own form of hell, as Naden acknowledges in her comparison of it to 'Demons who wed in Tophet;' (1887: 156) a location synonymous with child sacrifice by immolation to ancient gods, Moloch and Baal, a practice forbidden in the Bible (Leviticus 18: 21). The four caesuras in the final three lines of the sestet are especially abrupt, separated by colons and semi-colons. They are indicative of a slowing down of huge bursts of combustible cosmic energy into coalescing gasses, as aeons go by, in the formation of the universe. This is not the seeming simplicity of creation but rather the stars slowly become suns and eventually, near one such sun, our own earth is generated:

> With ringèd fiery clouds, in glowing gyres
> Rotating: æons passed: the encircling rings
> Split into satellites; the central fires
> Froze into suns, and thus the world was formed. (1887: 156)

The sonnet represents an important nexus between cosmology and evolutionary theory. If one accepts the nebular hypothesis promulgated in this sonnet, then Naden requires the reader to accept the next stage of the journey which is evolution.

After *A Modern Apostle etc.* Naden had her sonnet 'Rest' published in *The Woman's World* in March 1888. Oscar Wilde had become editor in November 1887 and wrote to

Naden sometime afterwards requesting a poem.[36] Although we have no extant evidence of Naden's direct response, Wilde's letter obviously had the desired effect because she had 'Rest' published in the new series of the magazine:

> ON the soft grass, among the daffodils,
> I lay, and thought, up-gazing at the blue-
> "Could I dream long, and bid the world dream too,
> In changeless noonday, while the lark distils
> From earth and heaven fresh music for his trills,
> And feel the sunshine glowing through and through
> My frame, until its glory should imbue
> The soul, that anxiously her fate fulfils-
>
> "Surely all yearnings which that bird above
> Sings not; all sorrow and regret and pain;
> The shadow of death that lies on Love's own hours
> Nay, Love itself – sad, wistful, human Love-
> Must rise like vapours, leaving heart and brain
> Young, free, and radiant as the noon-lit flowers." (1888b: 218)

Ostensibly this complex sonnet depicts a young person lying on the grass looking up at the sky on a bright, warm spring mid-day whilst a lark trills in the background. The lark, in its jubilant state, seems to be able to extract the most satisfying elements from nature to produce music. Even as the warmth of the day permeates the speaker's soul, the octet ends with the realization that, within this idealized world, that there are darker forces that are outside the speaker's control. As the sestet begins, we understand that the lark itself does not fear such forces or at least does not sing of sorrow, regret or pain. Creatures like the lark live in the moment and, whilst this appears to be antithetical to evolution and the struggle for survival, the fact is that the lark survives and is in balance with its environment. The shadow of death in line eleven could be referencing Psalm 23:

> Even though I walk
> through the valley of the shadow of death
> I will fear no evil,
> for you are with me;
> your rod and your staff,

[36] See Appendix One for a brief description of Wilde's editorship of *The Woman's World*. The appendix also includes a copy of the unpublished letter and a transcription.

they comfort me. (Psalm 23: 4)

The symbolism of the darkness and death of the valley that must be traversed in human life is simply part of what it is to be human in a sometimes gloomy and often dangerous world. Another way to read 'the shadow of death' is that in the natural world, shadows that are lengthy in the morning and late afternoon, are at their shortest point at noon and this provides hope for the finale of the sonnet. The poem is about the natural world, with living creatures foregrounded and without reference to a creator and this serves as the inspiration for the speaker who now realizes that the conjoining of the lark and the natural world is also symbolic of human love. Crucially, though, we must embrace the spirit of the lark in its oneness with nature and if we do this then for our noonday, at least, the shadows presaging death will lift like a rising mist. This optimism provides us, Naden suggests, with healthy bodies and minds and ultimately renders us happy as the lark and glowing with health and vigour like flowers in the mid-day sun.

In this chapter I have shown that Naden's later poetry displays a progression in both her poetic skill and the confidence with which she asserts her scientific and philosophical beliefs. Her maturing philosophy now melds a trust in scientific progress with an understanding of how religion has evolved from its historical past to its challenging present. She is not unequivocal, though, and her awareness of history, especially in relation to the development of religion, colours her own beliefs as to how this has driven or inhibited the progress of humanity. She is mindful that, from the time humans first began to be aware of our surroundings, our nascent interest in science began to colour our religious belief. Naden's poetry, therefore, often provides glimpses of early civilisations beginning the long process of attempting to understand what this means in a holistic sense and she is fascinated by how those societies embed science within their development. As Martin Fichman (citing M. Greene) argues: 'by comprehending the universe in a certain

orderly, logical manner, human societies could gain some degree of effective influence over the forces of nature (M. Greene 1992)' (2002: 19). Inevitably, Fichman's viewpoint assumes a collision path with the Creationist argument, that God created species with Man representing his finest and most important achievement. The idea that our descendants were part of a natural world that included creatures once created by God but that are now extinct was anathema to Creationists. By Naden's time, science was providing compelling evidence to support its theories, especially in relation to the emerging fossil record. Naden's scientific journey and brief writing career was, however, not an especially glorious or triumphant one because there was never a clear victory for science over religion that she could claim or record. As Fichman observes of this period: 'The presumed triumph of secular science over traditional religious and other cultural authorities is also questionable' (2002: 18). Certainly, one cannot read Naden's later poetry with any sense of science triumphing over religion but even though two of the three long poems, 'A Modern Apostle' and 'The Elixir of Life' do concern religion and some of the shorter poems engage with the subject too, there is little doubt that religion begins to fade away in her later poetry.

In the first section, 'Science and Religion' I considered such poems in the light of her attempt to reconcile these two important areas of her thinking and to explore the nexus within which the two might co-exist. 'A Modern Apostle' frames the major motifs of science and religion and, indeed, most aspects of her thinking, covering not only religious doubt and the search for a new orthodoxy but also pantheism, evolutionism, capitalism, love and nature. It is an unsettling poem in its energetic questing for answers. In this challenging and sometimes bewildering world nature remains, for Naden, the constant feature. To attempt to understand nature, or in Naden's case, to desire a communing with it

meant, inevitably, that God starts to recede in importance and at times disappears altogether from her work.

As part of the post-Darwinian generation Naden, in her later poetry, explores the putative boundaries between the natural world, natural selection, sexual selection and what that means for religion and the rival obligations to nature, human love and a love of God. Evolution and religion clearly co-exist uneasily and this duality is further challenged by the question of what happens if God's pre-eminence is threatened or, indeed, is removed altogether. The progress from the unquestioningly rigid religious dogma towards an evolution of ideas, as typified in 'A Modern Apostle', demonstrates a progression in Naden's ideas from her earlier poetry. Despite the complexities of competing ideologies, the mutability of scientific theories, the harshness of nature, or the absurdities of sexual attraction, through it all stands Ella, resolute and confidently looking to the future. Inevitably it is tempting to think that it is Ella who represents Naden's emerging confidence and optimism in the late 1880s, whilst also exemplifying Naden's own dilemmas concerning her education and the compatibility of this facet of her life, with the possibility of a fruitful human relationship.

In my analysis of sexual selection, a theory that was not generally accepted for many years after Darwin's or Naden's death, I show that she is clearly fascinated by it. 'The Story of Clarice' explores some of the complexities and indeed absurdities of sexual attraction. Levine argues: 'Sexual selection, however, is a theory that depends on the assumption that only by recognizing that dimorphic details are indeed of some 'service', after all, can one make sense of racial and sexual difference' (2003: 44). So, our sexual needs and our appreciation of beauty are at a base level mere animal instincts at play and, just as within the animal kingdom, the issue of who does the choosing is explored by Naden in this section. As a response to Darwinian notions of female inferiority two of the

four ‘Evolutional Erotics’ poems have female characters who are not impressed by their male admirers. In ‘Scientific Wooing’ the youth is not rejected *per se* but is simply made to feel far beneath the woman he seeks to woo, so that any union appears highly unlikely on her part. In ‘Natural Selection’ the male archaeologist is rejected by Chloe in favour of an unintelligent male, who can nonetheless sing and dance, in a humorous twist to notions of male superiority through intelligence. In ‘The New Orthodoxy’ a more complex pattern emerges as both man and woman are university graduates and whilst Fred still loves and wants Amy, his resistant father, Sir Fred, represents the patriarchal rejection of female academic achievement. Since seeing women as inferior beings was still part of the dominant ideology, a theory that allowed women to play an active rather than a passive role in sexual selection was a step too far for the majority in Naden’s life-time. Despite criticisms of Darwin’s casual misogyny Levine sees his theory as, in practice, having a very positive role in its paradoxical assigning of some choice to the woman:

> Having identified the gender prejudices of the culture that play into Darwin’s imagination of ‘sexual selection’, one will find that the theory itself forces a break with just those prejudices that produced it, and Darwin’s reversal of his argument from animals to humans is a particularly good sign that his thought outleaped the culture that helped form it. (2003: 45)

It is in the complexities of the natural world and the human condition in the arena of sexual selection articulated by Levine, that Naden appears to enjoy exploring but only while attacking some of the patent absurdities inherent in human and animal behaviour.

The sonnets of *Songs and Sonnets* were notable for their description of contrasting emotional states throughout a year in nature. In *A Modern Apostle etc.*, however, the sonnets are overwhelmingly confident and positive in their affirmations of science and philosophy. Harmony with nature is crucial to Naden and in ‘Poet and Botanist’ she seeks to bring together poetry, evolution, botany, natural and sexual selection with nature and harness the power of our imagination. Naden connects with the Darwinian assertion that, to

be workable, natural selection must operate amongst all living things on earth including plants. For a population that was struggling with notions of sexual selection amongst human beings it is unsurprising that the sonnet is not given a more prominent position in the collection but it is, nonetheless, one of Naden's most important sonnets. Such a conjoining with a natural world that is also a sexual world too can be an intense experience. In 'The Double Rainbow' mythology is again associated with the power of our imagination to feel other elements of nature, such as natural phenomena like the rainbow, and to see them in as intense a manner as the sexual world of reproduction. The confidence that emanates from 'The Nebular Theory' makes it a key sonnet, embracing as it does the cosmological union of the universe from which everything must flow and evolution which follows. With an oblique reference to the biblical account of creation from Genesis, Naden's sonnet is a cosmological account of the birth of the universe in fourteen densely packed lines of poetry. As such it depicts the starting point of the whole Darwinian story of evolution based on scientific discovery and pursuit of knowledge. Although it is not a sonnet, the unpublished poem 'The Birth of Pain' is a fragment that complements 'The Nebular Theory'. An incomprehensible external force of 'awful shuddering', and low background noise of a 'murmur' (1) [37] travels across space. The 'echoing spheres' [38] could be a reference to both the structure of early organisms and the expanse of the cosmos. This connection with the tiniest barely sentient creatures on earth with the awesomeness of the cosmos and its 'dread refrain' (1) is both scientific and irreligious. The meaning of 'dread' can be a state of apprehension or, to use its more archaic term, Naden could mean to hold in respectful awe. Both interpretations are equally plausible given that it comes from across the cosmos to the natural world on earth. The convulsions, the murmuring, the dread

[37] The entire fragment of 'The Birth of Pain' is published for the first time on p.1 of this thesis.
[38] The meaning of 'echoing spheres' is elusive and was used in the nineteenth century in at least two poems, 'The Promises' by Helen Mar Johnson and 'Lord of all Life' by George Howard, Earl of Carlisle. Both were religious poems and appear to be unconnected with Naden's more secular verse here.

refrain all seem to echo the act of giving birth through a feminised and anthropomorphised cosmos. Whether Naden means giving birth to natural worlds that seed the sentient life from which evolution would take its painful course or the birth of human consciousness is elusive.

I have shown how Naden's poetry engages with the cultural context of the language and debates of her time in ways that by the very nature of poetry are often fluid, challenging or elusive to interpret. The search for a means to accommodate science and religion through poetry forms one of the two main pillars of Naden's thinking at the time. The second pillar is an overarching pantheism, whereby Naden desires a communing with nature to achieve a state of harmony such that any notions of an everlasting existence beyond earth would be rendered not only impossible but also unnecessary. Naden believes that the way to achieve such harmony is through philosophy; a philosophy of science that encompasses religion with science and harnesses the communicative power of our imaginations through language. This reflects the influence of Spencer who was at his most popular during the 1870s/1880s. He influenced Naden's poetry because, through his *Synthetic Philosophy*, the cosmos, the natural world and evolution, as perceived through our senses and translated into our consciousness, he posited that harmony with nature could be achieved. Whilst Darwin had provided extensive research to support his theory of natural selection, it was the wide appeal of Spencer's fusing of all elements into a science-based philosophy that meant he dominated the period of Naden's adult life. His immense *Synthetic Philosophy* removed teleological implications and posited instead an interconnected set of relationships governing the entire cosmos. Naden's attempt at distilling this still further was through her philosophy of Hylo-Idealism by suggesting that the cosmos exists within each individual consciousness. The next chapter analyses Naden's

oeuvre of essays and letters to bring greater clarity to our understanding of Naden's apparent journey from religion to science through that philosophy.

Chapter 3 – The Creed of the Coming Day: Essays and Letters (1878-1890)

Over the past forty years, research into Naden has focused on her poetry with very little commentary or analysis of her essays and letters. This lack of attention to Naden's entire oeuvre is surprising given that her prose offers a more direct insight into her thinking during the 1880s. I will address this issue through a systematic close reading of Naden's prose to provide as complete an assessment as possible of the development of her evolutionary narratives. My chronological approach provides the most apposite methodology to trace this development. I have divided the chapter into sections to analyse an unpublished 'Philosophy' notebook, discovered in 2015,[39] and then to scrutinise her contributions to various publications of the era. Some publications are not especially well known today and so, where appropriate, I have provided a short paragraph in each section describing the publication as it was known at the time Naden's work appeared within it.

In 1879 Naden entered the Birmingham and Midlands Institute, which was 'created for the Diffusion and Advancement of Science, Literature and Art amongst all Classes of Persons resident in Birmingham and the Midland Counties' by an Act of Parliament in 1854;[40] The plethora of new journals and publications during this period provided an opportunity for Naden to reach a wider and more diverse audience than through poetry alone. The marketplace was disparate, however, and did not reflect any kind of organised scientific movement but echoed the enthusiasm for scientific subjects. Peter Morton argues that despite the energy and enthusiasm that spawned the popularity of science-based magazines they cannot be analysed as a reflection of the coherent views of any viewpoint (2014: 58). Morton alludes to the fact that opinions on subjects such as evolution came

[39] In 2015 three unpublished notebooks were deposited by Naden's descendants at the Cadbury Research Library. The 'Philosophy' notebook contains jottings by Naden dated 1878.
[40] See Birmingham and Midland Institute http://bmi.org.uk/about.html

from a wide spectrum of understanding and socio-economic backgrounds. The demand for the dissemination and discussion of science across all classes of people, eager to embrace new discoveries, led to the success of magazines such as *The English Mechanic and World of Science*; it was especially successful in appealing to middle-class readers like Naden.[41] This was the first successful science-based magazine and such was its success that it eventually took over all its immediate rivals including the *Mechanic*, *World of Science*, *Penny Mechanic*, *Scientific Opinion* and the *British and Foreign Mechanic* (Brake and Demoor 2009: 203). Such magazines brought mathematics, technology and science to widespread attention, with astronomy being especially popular. It was an age of autodidacts and the type of journals and magazines that were prepared to publish the opinions of young writers such as Naden, to their credit, were not elitist and welcomed contributions from the public. It was in this context that Naden (and Lewins) sought to publish their own religious, scientific and philosophical beliefs.

Naden was not published by what Paul White (2014: Ch.8) considers to be the 'higher journalism' of the 1870/1880s such as *The Spectator*, *The Dublin Review*, *Economist*, *Fraser's Magazine*, *Cornhill Magazine*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, *Contemporary Review*, *Fortnightly Review*[42] or *Nineteenth Century*. She would, though, have been very familiar with most of these publications and she would have probably enjoyed their science-based contributions. Also, it is highly likely that her reading and understanding of science, as advocated by T.H. Huxley in his Mason College speech of 1881, would not have come solely from her grandparents' library but from the plethora of scientific periodicals that were available to a wealthy household and which often outstripped the popularity of books.

[41] Published weekly at 2d during Naden's time, and hugely popular. Brake and Demoor (2009: 2003) state that at its height the circulation was 30,000 a week. It ran from 1865 to 1926.
[42] Although Naden did have her essay 'Pig Philosophy' declined by the *Fortnightly Review*.

Naden was published in a variety of journals such as the *Midland Naturalist*, the *Journal of Science*, *Knowledge* and controversial, freethinking publications such as *Our Corner* and *The Agnostic Annual*. She was also published in magazines such as *The Scottish Art Review* and the *Mason College Magazine*. What dominates this part of her writing career is the way that religion and science become fused through her philosophy of science, Hylo-Idealism. Further to my own description of Hylo-Idealism in the 'Introduction', Reverend Ebenezer Cobham Brewer's attempt to describe its inner workings is often opaque but helpful, nonetheless, in its attempt to portray it as simply as possible. According to his exposition, we all possess a subjective Ego and an objective Non-ego. The former represents what we know based on our experiences and the knowledge that we have gained. The latter is simply the unknown or unknowable and belongs to the Non-ego or objective world that we do not understand. In Hylo-Idealism, if something in the objective world is proven by science, then it is possible for this to move to our subjective Ego. Some areas might always remain unknown to us and there can be no intermediate area; phenomena are either known or unknown, objective or subjective. Human endeavour will always ensure that some things move between our Ego and Non-ego known, primarily due to scientific discovery, as Brewer explains: 'Thus, since telescopes and microscopes were used, thousands and tens of thousands of far-off worlds, and countless myriads of protozoa, too small to be discerned by the naked eye, have made their advents from the Terra Incognita to the now well-known world' (1891: 5). It is the unknowable element of Hylo-Idealism that is especially interesting for my analysis of evolutionary narratives. Firstly, because it is the clearest indication of Naden's agnosticism at the time. Secondly because the concept of the 'unknowable' immediately recalls Herbert Spencer who influences Naden profoundly as I shall illustrate throughout this chapter.

It is important, before turning to Naden's own writing, to understand the extent of the influence of Robert Lewins by this stage in her career. Brewer offers the most telling insight into the initial relationship between Lewins, the middle-aged, retired army surgeon and his eighteen-year-old protégé, Naden. Brewer enjoyed a thirty-year friendship with Lewins and clearly in *Constance Naden and Hylo-Idealism. A Critical Study* (1891) he credits Lewins with an enormous influence on Naden's development; he states: 'There cannot be a doubt that Dr. Lewins, of the Army Medical Department, gave Miss Naden her mental bias' (Brewer 1891: 3). Brewer showers Lewins with fulsome praise and describes a distinguished army veteran, who is a very well-read and an extremely driven man. Naden is credited with her ability quickly to understand Lewins's philosophy but Brewer acknowledges her immaturity at this stage: 'She was too young to be strongly biassed [sic], and listened to learn rather than to dispute' (1891: 3). His analysis of Naden as a quick-learning and eager adolescent acolyte does not, however, entirely ring true. For example, when Brewer goes on to write: 'It was Miss Naden who changed the term Hylo-zoism into Hylo-idealism, and she helped to popularise the subject by numerous contributions to different periodicals' (1891: 4), Lewins corrects him in a footnote on the same page: '*Note by Dr. Lewins*. In reality the *term* was coined by myself though the concept was her suggestion' (1891: 4). One needs to read both with some caution. Brewer is writing as a respectful friend to Lewins, to whom he has given the right to annotate his pamphlet rather than simply peer-reviewing and approving a final version. Also, given that this publication post-dated Naden's death Lewins, as I shall argue in the next chapter, was attempting not only to keep alive her memory but to establish her within the narratives of this period. But within Lewins's statement above is the admission that it was Naden who provided the intellectual impetus behind the philosophy. This is important for two reasons, firstly because Naden was clearly far more than Brewer's description of her as a willing acolyte.

Secondly, Lewins's role in Naden's development is crucial for my assertions about his control of her afterlife in Chapter Four. Naden herself helps us here. Brewer quotes her as writing: 'the letters addressed to myself by Dr. Lewins, in the years 1878-1880, aided by conversation and by study of the exact and moral sciences [have] convinced me of the truth of his position' (1891: 4-5). This statement suggests that she was prepared to listen and to learn but that she was absorbing the facts and distilling these into her own views; this is a recognisable trait of the later Naden. Her noted quick-thinking and ability to assimilate rapidly complex issues adds weight to Lewins's assertion that she created the concept of Hylo-Idealism (although in the next chapter I suggest that towards the end of her life she may have begun to distance herself from it). The comments that Brewer attributes to Naden above increases the importance of the 1878 'Philosophy' note book. It provides a crucial link between the first meeting between Naden and Lewins in 1876 and their philosophical discussions between 1878-1880. Her ideas in the notebook provide signposts to her future direction and inform her later published prose. I will begin, therefore, with an analysis of the unpublished 'Philosophy' notebook.

***The 'Philosophy' Notebook* – 1878**

The discovery of the 'Philosophy' Notebook (1878) sheds new light on Naden's development during this period. Intriguingly, Naden creates a numbering scheme for individual sections of this small notebook of ninety-one pages. The numbering ranges from 82-147 and so it seems likely that there was another notebook preceding this one. Furthermore, the first paragraph of the notebook refers to a mysterious 'red book':

> There is very little here that is not in substance contained in my letters during the past year: but as you miss the "red book" you may perhaps like to see this. I will write soon, & this shall supply the place of an extra letter. I have sent the L.D. to Miss H. [1878: un-numbered]

The intended recipient of the book is likely to have been Lewins (although the last sentence could provide clues for further investigation) because it is doubtful that anyone

else would have received such a notebook instead of a letter. The 'Philosophy' Notebook (1878) should form an important part of any future Naden studies but I will focus on the key philosophical elements relevant to her scientific and religious beliefs for this post-Darwinian period. Ostensibly, Naden wants to reconcile science and religion and she offers the following thoughts in that vein:

> but we must tenderly handle the fair vestures in which she [religion] was clothed by our forefathers. Compelled to strip them away, we must do so carefully & reverently, lest our too rough hands should momentarily injure that which is most dear to us. We cannot claim greater power of intellect than those who preceded us. (1878: 10)

Naden does not allow religion an equal place with science, though, and she later qualifies the above statement:

> Why walk in darkness? Why mourn with unavailing tears for the old beliefs? Instead of being angry because we have been somewhat rudely awaked from a pleasant dream, let us look about us, & see the fair Paradise that only awaits to be discerned. (1878: 18)

By 'fair Paradise' Naden means the philosophy that will replace and compensate humankind for the inevitable fading away of religion in the face of science.

After having been reasonably sympathetic to the actions of past theologians, she makes it clear that her generation shall not escape so lightly: 'Men always desire knowledge, & from this desire springs that pretended understanding of the Invisible which is called theology' (1878: 19). Naden suggests that in the past, had we been so enlightened as to have not been taught religion from an early age, then we would have sought to better explain our existence through the natural world. This presupposes that this would have been done with scientific authority, however, because her argument here is tenuous and somewhat naïve. Herbert Spencer's belief that religion developed from a natural human fear of death was allied to superstitions that were born out of a dread of the natural world. Spencer's reasoning is more plausible than Naden's suggestion that had science been

sufficiently advanced there would have been no need for religion. Spencer recognises that religion, like animals and society must evolve from a distant and less enlightened past.

Ostensibly, Naden's deference for the past acknowledges that religion once had primacy. If science disproves received wisdom, however, Naden argues that this must be accepted in the spirit of discovery rather than signalling a retreat into dogma. Naden posits that religion is genuine in its feeling whilst being fundamentally wrong in its reasoning: 'The emotion is merely misdirected, like the love of a woman for a man who is unworthy or irresponsive, like the conscientiousness of a persecuting zealot, who destroys the bodies of men that he may save their souls' (1878: 23-24). This passage is remarkable for the two contrasting statements it contains. The mood that Naden creates begins with the mildness of a 'misdirected' emotion but this morphs into religious zealotry. Naden asserts that we cannot ever empirically know God and even if his existence could be proved, it will be far too awesome to comprehend. Naden's view, therefore, is that it is the centripetal and centrifugal forces that direct the planets and not a supernatural designer; humans, endowed with thoughts and emotions, have evolved out of these natural forces. These forces came from matter and humans are part of a journey from an initial animating principle, which remains to be discovered, to now being part of what Naden calls, 'the truth of the theory of Evolution' (1878: 33). This startling notion also has the effect of ameliorating the charge often directed against materialism, of its coldness. Naden acknowledges religion for its role in directing morality, castigates it for its false reasoning and now assigns primacy to science and the understanding of matter of which our minds are simply the conscious part: 'All sensations are products of matter whether acting upon itself, or working in conjunction with other material entities' (1878: 45). A future state of well-being will result from science-based reasoning and to bring harmony to our desires and actions through our

consciences; this will lead to the curbing of excesses of our emotions which usually lead to misfortune.

Naden recognises that at this stage neither religion, science nor philosophy can provide all the answers but that by understanding and communing with nature we can glimpse the possibilities:

> When the summer sun is bright, when birds sing & flowers glow, it is the joy of the universe that floods the heart. We feel ourselves one with these 'happy living things,' & with the sunlight and the music & the fragrance that flow around us. We are as waves of a golden shining sea, pervaded with the glory of nature, and inseparable from it. Then we distinctly realize that unity which before was apprehended only by the mind. (1878: 57 – 8)

The mind reigns supreme and, for Naden, religion fails because faith cannot be tested scientifically. Nor can religion accommodate science because knowledge and reason are becoming preeminent which leaves the Church with mere speculation. Having previously applauded religion for its teachings of love and morality, Naden attacks it trenchantly: 'The Christian is attracted by what he feels to be the beauty & grandeur of his religion; I am repelled by what I feel to be its injustice & cruelty' (1878:62). These thoughts of a twenty-year old Naden suggest that she is already on a trajectory from agnosticism to possibly atheism in this acerbic assessment of the Christian messages of atonement, salvation through faith and fear of eternal damnation:

> The conclusions to which it leads us, being purely intellectual, can be neither virtuous nor vicious; whether believers or unbelievers, we merit the same amount of praise. That the 'wrath of God' should be upon all sceptics (as stated by Christ) is therefore a most cruel injustice. That they should be punished after death for their unbelief is incredible, except on the supposition that God is a tyrant, who punishes men for what is the natural outcome of their nobler faculties, when freely & fully exercised,– a supposition equally blasphemous & absurd. (1878: 63)

Naden always returns to first principles of knowledge and reason built upon scientific proof; she does this again in the concluding parts of the notebook in the arch and humorous way that made her such a skilled debater (Hughes 1890: 19): 'it is also unphilosophical to deny that of fairies and ghosts, & pre-eminently unphilosophical,– nay

absurd–to refuse the possession of spirit to the lower animals & to vegetables, which possess vitality' (1878: 67). After having vigorously attacked theology, she fears the vacuum potentially caused by the loss of religion, but she does not possess confidence at this stage in the populace:

> A good man does not need the fear of hell or the hope of heaven to render his actions noble; a naturally bad one is usually beyond the rate reach of such influences; so are dull & unimpassioned natures which form the great majority of mankind. (1878: 72)

It was our inherent morality that led to the creation of religion and it is our morality that must give us the courage to pursue another path, but this will be based upon a scientific-based philosophy. Naden knew that these ideas would face significant oppositions and in her first published essay in the *Journal of Science* she faces these objections.

***Journal of Science* – 1881-1884**

From its beginnings in the 1860s as the *Quarterly Journal of Science*,[43] incorporating the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* in 1864, the objective of the *Journal of Science* was to bring the latest scientific news and developments to the scientific community and an eager public. Initially it was a quarterly priced at 5s and to justify the price its production was of a high quality. It was interested in religion but science was its focus, as Brake and Demoor observe: 'articles by both major and minor scientists, reports on the progress of science and technology, on scientific societies, and signed book reviews' (2009: 521). A name change to the *Monthly Journal of Science* in 1879 and a new price of 1s 6d with less than a third of the content of its quarterly predecessor, does not seem to have boosted significantly its initial circulation of 2,000. When John W. Slater took over the editorship from one of the journal's founders, William Crookes, it became simply the *Journal of Science* and this was the recognised name and final format of the publication that Naden wrote for during 1881-3. The journal did not survive for much longer and, aside from

[43] Not to be confused with the *Quarterly Journal of Science, Literature and the Arts* that ran from 1816 till 1830 when it became the *Journal of the Royal Institution* until 1832.

competition and downward pressures on magazines that attempted to retain a broad appeal in the face of significant scientific specialisation, there is the following speculation from Brake and Demoor: 'Reasons for closure in December 1885 are unclear, though references to abuse from anti-vivisectionists offer a clue' (2009: 522).

In 'Hylozoic Materialism' (1881) Naden confronts both scientific and religious objectors to materialism by asserting, as she does in the 'Philosophy' Notebook, that matter is active and is not animated by a supernatural force. Furthermore, there is no separation between matter and consciousness, which is the essence of Hylozoism. Naden ironically suggests that we are, therefore, all materialists at heart even though nothing can be proved definitively. By rejecting dualism in favour of monism she feigns surprise that the pantheistic idea that nature and God are the same should meet with such objections. As a scientist, she simply cannot limit herself to accepting something as supernatural simply because we cannot explain it. Naden draws upon the 'Philosophy' Notebook by once again stating, ironically, that lack of evidence for the existence of the soul means we cannot deny the existence of fairies, goblins, ghosts or witchcraft. She circumspectly refers to God as 'that invisible, intangible, indemonstrable entity' (C.N. 1881a: 315) in her rejection of the supernatural. Naden views nature symbiotically in the way that cells breathe and live and form plants and animals. This biological view further reduces the credence for God and religion: 'To regard sensation as proceeding from a super-material essence–a *donum divinum* superadded to organisation–rather than from that physical development of nerve tissue with which it is invariably associated, is to prefer hypothesis to thesis, fable to fact (C.N. 1881a: 317). Naden equates Darwinism with materialism because a knowledge of biology denies space for a supernatural creator: 'Man has created God in his own image; but he cannot conceive his Deity to be all in all, and truly omnipresent, until he has recognised the sentient and non-sentient Cosmos as an indivisible and homogenous unity

(C.N. 1881a: 318). In other words, our anthropomorphising of God is especially problematical because in a pantheistic view he would surely be an intimate part of everything and not merely the human.

In response to criticism about her materialism in a letter from a Mr. J.H. Barker[44] Naden begins her next essay 'Hylozoism *versus* Animism' with a quotation from Martin Luther: 'God is a blank sheet, on which nothing is found but what we ourselves have written' (C.N. 1881b: 521). Her claim that Hylozoism was used by Ralph Cudworth in his seventeenth century essay could be a reference to *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), in part stressing that the laws of Nature do not necessarily need the influence or external management of God. Naden traces Hylozoic Materialism back to Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius in the rejection of the supernatural, but she accepts it is anathema to a belief in God. Her characteristically ironical and cutting tone is evident as she acknowledges that the apparent simplicity of her philosophy is at odds with those who are 'more strongly attracted by complex fictions than by plain facts' (C.N. 1881b: 522).

Naden follows on from her equating religion and fiction with an even more direct attack on materialism's critics and their failure to accept the truth that is there to see in nature:

> Not till he has woven and rejected or worn out successive garbs of fable can he bear to gaze upon the naked truth; and this explains the hostility which Materialism has encountered from many grand and subtle intellects, who have chosen to deck Nature with false jewels instead of seeking docilely for her native treasures. (C.N. 1881b: 522)

The lack of a scientific basis for religion and a rejection of dualism is part of what Naden calls the pre-Lavoisierian fallacy.[45] In the Frenchman's spirit of enquiry Naden

[44] Barker had a letter published in the *Journal of Science* (July 1881) titled 'Animism *versus* Hylozoism' in which he criticises Naden's materialist philosophy especially the theory of an animating principle that denies God as a First Cause. He attacks the philosophy further in the *Journal of Science* (October 1881) where he describes C.N. as Dr. Lewins's shadow.
[45] Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier was an influential 18th-century French chemist.

mischievously demands evidence of the existence of fairies and goblins and witches and their position in the hierarchy of the soul. Of course, there can be no such evidence which in her view gives science the ascendancy:

> That animal life is the outcome of certain chemical processes, upon which its energy and continuance are entirely dependent, appears to me as certain a proposition as that the combustion of a candle results from the combination of its carbon and hydrogen with the oxygen of the atmosphere. (C.N. 1881b: 525)

Naden's 1882 essay 'Animal Automatism' continues her argument for materialism but this time through an exploration of the role of consciousness. She focuses on two essays by T.H. Huxley, 'On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata and its History' and 'On Sensation, and the Unity of Structure of Sensiferous Organs' (Huxley 1882).[46] In 'Animal Automatism' Naden considers Huxley's essays and their exploration of the self-functioning nature of animal consciousness in relation to external stimuli, with humans merely the most complex example. Ostensibly, the issue for Naden's monism is that if the brain creates our world then how can we be sure of the existence of matter itself? She considers three hypotheses: Animism (that animals and plants possess a spiritual essence); Pre-Established Harmony (that God has programmed things to harmonise); and finally, materialism that she unsurprisingly supports, though she does not do so unequivocally. In the latter part of the essay, in questioning further the existence of the soul, she writes: 'Can a separable spiritual essence be considered absolutely superfluous, or must the "dead matter" of the universe be inspired with energy from some external source before it can fashion itself into living and sentient organisms?' (C.N. 1882: 191). For Naden, Darwinian nature is endlessly changing and developing in response to external stimuli and living cells are a product of this profusion; this is Huxley's case too. Throughout her essay Naden uses

[46] Of the thirteen essays in Huxley's collection Naden ignores the two most obvious ones to review – 'Evolution in Biology' and 'The Coming of Age of "The Origin of Species"' (Huxley 1882). I suggest that this is because the former is more of a select history of the subject and the latter an extended assertion of Darwin's acceptance, by this time, into mainstream thought.

Huxley's essays to promote her own views. While moving further away from God she remains uncommitted to 'Absolute Agnosticism', though, which is the Spencerian belief that we simply cannot know of the existence of God. Hylo-Idealism accepts that there are things that we might never know but it is a more empirically based agnosticism that asserts that it is always possible that someday science might provide answers to the 'unknowable'. David Gordon observes that:

> Agnosticism is so very useful a word in a discriminating study of atheism that we must consider its fate with some concern, must consider in particular the positivistic edge it acquired in the late nineteenth century, which made agnosticism difficult to distinguish from (dogmatic) atheism. (2002: 33)

Naden displayed the positivism that is alluded to above but Gordon's identification of the supposed difficulty in distinguishing between agnosticism and atheism is problematical. Although Naden was agnostic she did not embrace Lewins's aggressive atheism and instead sought compromise with religion. This enables us to detect the differences between her agnosticism and Lewins's atheism. Naden's lack of belief is founded on the conviction that science held the key. She was not aligned to Spencer's view, however, that Gordon has observed: 'For Spencer, religion and science alike were founded on what he called "unknowableness," giving an air of scientific respectability to religion and of mystery to science' (2002: 32). In her next essay, in the absence of scientific evidence Naden considers how philosophy can help in the interim as progress is made.

In 'The Identity of Vital and Cosmical Energy' (1882) Naden considers the opposing arguments between idealism and materialism which she resolves through Hylo-Idealism. In defending idealism, Naden describes how the deprivation of one sense leads to the heightening of others. It is logical to assume, therefore, that it is the nerve cells and brain that are interpreting and compensating in response to stimuli. It is the acquisition of knowledge, however, that presents a challenge to the idealist. Astronomers or geologists discovering the age of the cosmos or the earth use their imaginations, as well as their

knowledge, to describe their theories in the way that Darwin had done so elegantly in the *Origin*. Writing as Constance Arden[47] she argues: 'Evidently both astronomer and geologist mean to imply that Matter existed long before any known mind, and that the reality of its existence is in no way affected by the presence or absence of a percipient' (Arden 1882a: 251). Having set up an idealism versus materialism dichotomy, where idealism represents the mind and sensation and materialism represents the relevance and reality of matter, Naden then ponders how the two can come together. She attacks Dualism, describing it as a heresy, before introducing Lewins's own thesis that matter is self-sufficient through its own internal energy and that this does not require any external spiritual organisation. The inference is clear that God is now fading from the picture altogether. Yet how can we explain a dust-filled universe coalescing into living, sentient plants and animals? Naden asserts that the fact that we are made of matter and can even consider such problems, tells us that matter does coalesce in a graded way, with levels of complexity in its formation, to produce the simple progressing to the complex. This notion of a gradual evolution from simplicity to complexity is a Spencerian one, as is the intrinsic relationship of the organism to its environment:

> Just as the forces which operate in a living cell cannot be essentially different from those which sustain the entire body, so the identity of vital and cosmical energy is conclusively proved by the constant interchange of matter–and consequently of material force–which takes place between that body and its environment. (Arden 1882a: 254)

By rejecting animism, dualism and religion Naden seeks to unite materialism and idealism: 'Since the belief in "immortality" is inconsistent with materialistic views, it is plain that if Heaven is not for ever to remain an idle dream its delights must be realised on Earth' (Arden 1882a: 257). By earth Naden means within the natural world and within each individual and subjective mind.

[47] I provide an analysis of Naden's use of various pseudonyms in the Conclusion.

Naden seeks a middle path between the twin dangers of excessive sensuality and a predominance of brawn over brain. The intellect, if harnessed correctly, will be how society progresses 'for the cerebral fount of intellect and morality will share in the common well-being, and will remain the lord of life, and the creator of that Paradise which is enjoyed by all the members' (Arden 1882a: 258). Naden uses quasi-religious language by referring to 'lord of life' and 'creator of that Paradise'. This suggests that in a world without religion and driven by intellectual enquiry there will still be morality but virtues such as self-denial, self-sacrifice and the avoidance of self-indulgence will be driven by human feelings, rather than by supernatural guidance. Having a faith in a better future, though, did not prevent the destruction of great civilisations in the past. Naden is envisioning a Darwinian 'adapt and survive' approach to the future, allied to Spencer's ideas of society evolving as an organism in response to the demands of the environment. Such evolution will be driven by a philosophy that engages with the fears people have about death whilst replacing the vacuum left by religion with a new creed based on materialism – Hylo-Idealism.

Naden engages next with what she sees as Carlyle's antagonism towards materialism. 'The Philosophy of Thomas Carlyle' (1882), again published under the pseudonym of Constance Arden, is a diatribe against Carlyle's own elusive and often contradictory philosophy. Naden provides a very succinct precis of how she views his position:

> He held that all religions have been evolved from human experience, shaped by intellect, and coloured by feeling and imagination. No special revelation has ever been delivered; no special miracle ever performed. The natural and the supernatural are one, and their course is immutable. Man has in all ages created and uncreated his deities; but if gods are illusions, God is "the fact of facts." (Arden 1882b: 314)

Naden welcomes Carlyle's belief that God and Nature are intertwined and that matter is the manifestation of Spirit. Hylo-Idealism certainly has its roots in this Carlylean view as she

explains: ‘If the dust of the earth, and therefore the body of man, is divine, no separable soul is necessary or conceivable’ (Arden 1882b: 315). Her trenchant criticism of Carlyle is stimulated when she suspects his views to be more akin to Dualism than Pantheism:

> Save to the vulgar Dualist, who believes in an *external* Deity, it can signify little, at least in theory, whether we name our “first cause” Matter or Spirit, save that the former is a modest confession of ignorance, the latter an arrogant affectation of supreme knowledge. (Arden 1882b: 315)

Naden’s real objections to Carlyle, though, concern his antipathy to materialism. Naden’s essays up to this point see the world as matter endowed with energy and our sensory organs transmitting via nerves to our brain. Our brain performs the role of interpreter but how can we be confident that our senses are reflected accurately by our brain? Naden offers a confident, secular and agnostic assertion:

> We must and do assume that there is “something” which exists independently of perception; but of its essence we can know nothing. If then “God, heaven, or hell, are none of them annihilated for us,” they can only have their being on the same conditions as these “material woods and houses.” These ideas are true so as they claim none but ideal worth; (Arden 1882b: 318)

Naden’s rejection of an external God drives her materialist view of nature; embracing the Carlylean notion of an external omnipotent God, on the other hand, involves a diminution of our humanity. As she avows: ‘No generous action or lofty principle can be less generous or lofty because it is the coinage of a material organism. No glorious landscape can be less glorious because the mind which informs it with meaning is human, not Divine’ (Arden 1882b: 319). Naden, like Darwin, feels wonderment and awe at nature and argues that there is no need to look behind such natural phenomena to elevate them into the supernatural. Whereas advances in astronomy have shown the awesome, boundless nature of the cosmos, this should not necessarily lead us to conclude that a similarly boundless supernatural exists.

Naden devotes the final section of ‘The Philosophy of Thomas Carlyle’ to Darwin by contrasting his modern forward thinking approach to nature with Carlyle’s which she

describes as ‘medieval and theocratic’ (Arden 1882b: 321). She admires Darwin’s painstaking assemblage of scientific research and facts and his constant striving to piece the disparate elements together based on empiricism rather than animism. Darwin knew that he did not have all the answers but that never prevented him from continuing the search and, as Naden points out: ‘The theory of Natural Selection owes its epochal character to the nature of the evidence adduced in its support, and affords a perfect example of the potency of induction and the importance of *à priori* reasoning’ (Arden 1882b: 321). Naden locates Carlyle firmly in the pre-scientific ages of the past where to attempt to scrutinise God could be considered a heresy. The late nineteenth century scientific community now considered it equally heretical not to pursue such enquiry. Carlyle’s type of anti-scientific religiosity expected people simply to follow a set of outdated assumptions surrounding the supernatural, whereas Darwin expected people to acknowledge that the truth was difficult but that the pursuit of it was imperative. For Naden, it was now impossible to hide behind religion any longer.

By 1883 Naden’s writing is becoming more confident, assured and all-embracing by attempting to elucidate how philosophy, science, religion and poetry can be united. This is the essence of Hylo-Idealism, within the individual, subjective mind and is the subject of ‘The Brain Theory of Mind and Matter’ (Arden 1883). Once again, she argues that God exists within each of our subjective minds but not as a supernatural power. This notion of the subjective mind communing with material nature was awe-inspiring to Naden in its pantheistic identification of God and the universe as one; it was agnostic in its assertion that there were things we simply do not know but could discover; and it was secular in its replacement of an external God with an internal subjective one unique to everyone. Religion had filled a vacuum that had existed since humans first became sentient but for Naden it was delusional and hindered progress. Naden’s Spencerian vision was for society

to evolve to a future state of harmony by understanding and adapting to our environment. Building upon Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*, Hylo-Idealism would offer a system which would finally unite religion and science through philosophy; culture is fundamental to this vision. Whether we are experiencing the natural world or enjoying paintings, music or poetry, sometimes our emotions, ideas and imagination are harmonious with what we perceive whilst sometimes they are discordant. It is in these spaces that mythologies and religions have flourished over the centuries, exercising a great power over our senses. Hylo-Idealism rejects subjective notions positing that there can be no religious truth, no revealed final cause. Everything is explicable by starting with matter within the cosmos, adding to that organic and biological processes and ultimately exploring our human condition through philosophy. As Naden explains, our senses and our intellect light up the cosmos and not the supernatural:

> In the grey cells of the cerebral cortex are generated, not only the visible heaven, 'this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire,' but the poetic sense of its beauty and harmony, and even the conditions of time and space which correspond to the revolution of its spheres. (Arden 1883: 129)

Naden's writing shares a Spencerian vision of the need to recognise our place in the cosmos whilst understanding the temporal nature of our existence and the interconnectedness of our destiny with nature. In Naden's Spencerian view it was necessary to understand our evolution from simplicity to complexity by also understanding the transformative stages in our history. It was to such history that she turned in her next essay.

'Paracelsus' (Naden: 1883a) was read at a meeting of the Mason College Union on 16 February 1883. The topic was not as controversial or as overtly agnostic as Naden's previous contributions and so this was the first time that she published in the *Journal of Science* without using a pseudonym. The theme of 'Paracelsus' reputedly wandering Europe and the Far East in search of a universal medicine was the inspiration for 'The

Elixir of Life', which I analysed in Chapter Two. Paracelsus lived during a time when the sciences, especially chemistry, botany, anatomy and medicine, were emerging as disciplines worthy of study. Naden credits him with achievements including the use of mercury as a pharmaceutical drug, contributions to medicine and, although he was regarded as an alchemist in Naden's time, with providing the stimulus for the emerging discipline that would come to be known as chemistry.

The main thrust of 'Paracelsus', though, is to allow her to extrapolate her critique of his Renaissance views forwards into her nineteenth-century view. As Naden states, for example: 'Spite of the errors into which he was led, some praise is due to Paracelsus for his apprehension of the fact that vital processes are identical with those which take place in the inanimate world' (Naden 1883a: 191). Naden attributes to Paracelsus the notion that 'Human destiny is not *influenced* by celestial phenomena, but runs parallel with them, in a kind of pre-established harmony' (Naden 1883a: 191). This removes a controlling Godhead whilst suggesting that a harmonious relationship with nature and the cosmos is attainable. Clearly, Paracelsus was of his own time and when Naden writes: 'The World, according to him, is a great living Being, fashioned by God after the model of the eternal Universe of Ideas, and endowed with a soul' (Naden 1883a: 193), she ignores the reference to God and instead chooses to foreground the world as possessing a 'soul' made up of the creatures living their lives, with humans at the apex. In this essay Naden has drawn upon an ancient and, at times, controversial figure, to argue to her energetic and modern scientific audience that Paracelsus was a figure from whom they could learn much. In him Naden saw a mind that was, in all its petulant, difficult searching, one that embraced the imagination and one which broke new ground in the evolving sciences of his day. The essay looks back to the early beginnings of this evolution in science and forward to how Naden believes that science and now philosophy is leading the evolution of humanity.

In the final two essays of this period in the *Journal of Science* Naden continues to explore, through evolutionary narratives, how science and philosophy are evolving whereas religion, if it is evolving at all, is only doing so as a reaction to scientific progress or philosophical enquiry. 'Hylozoism and Hylo-Idealism' (C.N. 1884a) is primarily concerned with humans in the environment. Despite the title, the essay does not provide a detailed exposition of Hylozoism or indeed Hylo-Idealism. Continuing with a theme throughout these essays, of the importance of our senses and imagination, Naden takes issue with the Biblical statement 'And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light' (Genesis 1: 3). She describes it as a 'useless mandate unless there are eyes and a brain which can translate stimulus into sensation, and extract colour and form from hueless and formless impulses' (C.N. 1884a: 270). Naden is critical of the way that scientific achievements have been used to frighten or to awe us by the immensities of the universe and our seeming insignificance within it. Hylo-Idealism will serve to counter this error: 'Every man fashions and contains a Universe; and it is at least difficult to understand why the importance of the mind should be in inverse ratio to the magnitude of its contents' (1884a: 271). Human minds have continued to evolve from the ancient Greeks and geocentrism, Copernicus, heliocentrism and now to the autocentric inspiration for Hylo-Idealism. This puts the self at the centre of everything we know and perceive: '[the] shuddering sense of insignificance once inspired by the broadening of the heavens is now reversed, and made to enhance a thousand-fold the sense of human dignity' (C.N. 1884a: 272).

This essay contains one of the most important insights into Naden's thinking at the time. She reinforces her previous message of a belief that progress for humanity will ultimately be found in a science-based philosophy: 'Scientific theorising, indeed, has its appropriate and worthy place. It is valuable as subserving either practical use or

philosophic truth, which in its turn aims to be the minister of daily happiness' (C.N. 1884a: 272). Naden appropriates the quasi-religious language for a philosopher who ministers, not religious dogma, but a philosophy of science that is Spencerian in its movement from the simple to the complex:

> there is a temptation to invoke supernatural agency, and to account for the Inexplicable by ascribing its origin to the Unthinkable. Yet, looking closer, we see that there is no attribute of man or of imagined angel which has not its quaint parody in a lower rank of being. Human volition and the 'little living will' of the Nautilus differ in degree, in power, in variety of manifestation; but the difference is specific, not generic. (C.N. 1884a: 273)

This appropriation implicitly rejects the supernatural and in doing so Naden yokes together scientific empiricism and philosophical idealism to unify all the elements of her belief system. This secular thinking was, of course, not without its detractors and in her next essay she confronted such an opponent.

In 'Hylo-Idealism: A Defence' (C.N. 1884b) Naden is forced to defend her philosophy (although at the end of this essay she attributes its founding to Lewins)[48] against criticisms from a Mr. S. Billing. Hylo-Idealism, he asserts, with its materialistic monism and focus on the significance of the self, is irreligious and will lead to a lack of morality. His accusation is that Hylo-Idealism has serious consequences for an ordered society. For Billing, scientific empiricism and Hylo-Idealism were incompatible. Yet the essence of Hylo-Idealism was in its accommodation of both religion and science through the realm of human consciousness as Naden, in refuting her critic, declares:

> but it is the activity of the brain that brings the world into consciousness, and prescribes the form of space, time, and causality under which it shall appear. It is the material brain that gives light and shade, form and colour, extension and solidity to the Cosmos; it is the material brain that procreates the beauty which we love and the sublimity which we worship. Change the human organism, and you have changed the visible and the tangible Universe. (C.N. 1884b: 705)

[48] In *Constance Naden and Hylo-Idealism. A Critical Study* (1891) Lewins (Footnote on p.4) takes credit for coining the term but states that Naden created the concept. This is counter to Naden's claim here and adds further weight to Lewins's role in the creation of Naden's afterlife. Lewins appears to be attempting to control Naden even after death.

The above statement is notable for the way that Naden compounds idealism and materialism to energise the cosmos in an awesome interrelated whole. Naden has now evolved her thinking from Darwinian and Spencerian evolution to her belief that through consciousness humans have created the cosmos and our own natural world. This is the essence of Hylo-Idealism and as such this essay was a fitting end to what was to be the last essay Naden had published in the *Journal of Science*.

***Mason College Magazine* – 1883-1886**

The *Mason College Magazine* published its first edition in January 1883 priced at 6d. The objective was to create a magazine that would appeal to current members of the college as well as alumni. Given that Naden entered the college in 1881 it seems likely that she had a hand in the magazine's creation.[49] The magazine was looking for three main areas for contributions; news stories from students and alumni about their travels around the world; poetry and short stories; and, given that by 1882 the college had departments in Chemistry, Botany, Physiology, Physics, Geology, Minerology and Comparative Anatomy,[50] scientific and philosophical articles were most welcome.

Naden's essay 'Scientific Idealism' (Naden 1883b) pre-dates her final *Journal of Science* essay 'Hylo-Idealism: A Defence', but the similarity of subject-matter suggests that they were written around the same time. Naden, writing for students and academics of the Mason Science College, inhabits the role of philosopher-teacher to explain her subject. In recognising the Mason Science College motto 'Progress Through Knowledge', Naden poses a question; what can be known in the search for knowledge and how can we know it to be true? Naden wants to explore the relationship between the materialism of the external

[49] The editorial for the first edition in 1881 has an intriguing reference to the 'House of Solomon' (p.2) that recalls Naden's later poem 'Solomon Redivivus, 1886' which suggests that Naden may have written the first Introduction.

[50] The college also had departments in English Language and Literature, Greek and Latin, French and German and Mathematics.

world and the consciousness of our inner world. In doing so, she explores beyond Darwinian evolution into the nature of existence and perception through our sensory organs. From our senses, we form our view of an object, yet this object appears to us through the sensations that it has stimulated and which have been translated by our brain. What we perceive of the noumenon of matter, therefore, is done phenomenally. In this exploration Naden demonstrates an interest in and some knowledge of neuroscience because it is in the mysteries of the brain and consciousness that, further, the truth lies: 'It is as though, in this true *sensorium commune*, dwelt a set of artists working in unison, and busily employed in converting Chaos into Cosmos' (Naden 1883b: 30). This parable has a serious point because Hylo-Idealism states that the brain makes its own universe. It is only in relatively recent times, however, that science has provided a firmer foundation on which to build metaphysical speculation. Naden describes past human frailties:

> The idea that the life of man is a kind of modified somnambulism has been a centre of force in the poetry, philosophy, and religion of all ages, appearing now as a vague instinct, now as a mystical imagination, and again as a reasoned-out theory of perception. (Naden 1883b: 27-28)

She believes that if imagination, reason and emotions can all be influenced by what we can learn then we have an opportunity to evolve into morally better individuals and society will benefit. If this is the case, then the issue of the education of the masses becomes paramount. She acknowledges that the formal education that this requires has only been available to the few, however, who then expound their theories to the masses and that this has especially been the case with religion. Even if the opportunities were available, most people are inevitably pre-occupied with their own need to survive, to procreate and are simply following their animal and evolutionary instincts.

Naden believes that some theologians (although she does not name any specifically) are especially guilty of expounding theories that have been accepted by a willing populace and this makes the task of scientists, and especially philosophers very challenging: 'They

sighed for new worlds to conquer, while the old world was yet unsubdued' (Naden 1883b: 28). The essay presents the general principles of what she calls 'Scientific Idealism', presumably believing that her Mason Science College audience were not yet ready for Hylo-Idealism. Perhaps she was simply reluctant to advance her secular creed at this stage (her *Journal of Science* articles that introduce Hylo-Idealism were written under various pseudonyms). 'Scientific Idealism' seems to act as a cover for Hylo-Idealism, but Naden writes in a way that seeks to explain an area of thought rather than to advance her own theory; the two are almost identical. This is clear when having asserted an idealistic view by exploring sensory perception and the action of the brain, Naden then affirms the importance of matter. Naden believes that we perceive phenomenally but that there must be something else, a noumenon; in other words, matter. So, although our sensations are subjective and as individual as our brains, we cannot deny the existence of the cosmos even though understanding its initial formation from matter currently resides in the realms of the 'unknowable':

> Conditions which, in the absence of a sentient being, would not have been even Silence, Darkness, or Emptiness, are taken by the little artists in the cerebral hemispheres, and fashioned into a glorious Universe of Light, Sound, and Solidity, whence are born all the thoughts and all the desires of man. (Naden 1883b: 32)

In her next essay 'Is the Increasing Predominance of Brain over Muscle Conducive to National Welfare?' (Naden 1883c), Naden recognises that for philosophy to have credence it must evolve from a mere understanding of the physical sciences based on matter. The ironic title asks what is the point in mass-education when there is still manual work to be done? In fact, the notion of the brain dominating over muscle seems to conflict with religious notions of a healthy body equating to a healthy soul. Naden believes that religious despotism has exploited the lack of education amongst the people who have been so focused on the manual labour necessary to survive. She accepts the Spencerian notion of society as an evolving organism and this necessarily requires healthy individuals. The

spiritual development of society's individuals is not necessarily improved by science which is focused on the analytical methods and outputs of its multifarious disciplines. Language, even poetry, can help to communicate complex ideas often, as Darwin did through his prose, before those ideas become truly accepted as mainstream. Ultimately, Naden sees philosophy as bringing these things together to occupy the spiritual realm once occupied by religion.

Primarily, the problem that Naden identifies is that the engine of human evolution tends towards mental and physical specialisation: 'A nerve-cell is not worse, but better, for having lost the powers of contraction and locomotion which belong to its distant relative, the amoeba' (Naden 1883c: 84). By the 1880s, it is the cerebral that appears to be beginning to dominate over the physical. In secondary specialisation, though, the danger is an inherent narrowing of focus on one outlook or area, something that the polymath in Naden disliked. Her scientific education meant that she was well equipped to be multi-disciplinary, but she preferred to adopt the mantle of philosopher and leave the specialist subjects to other minds. In an age of increasing specialisation, the ability to take a multi-disciplinary approach was a significant challenge that few could master, as Naden shrewdly observes: 'the ordinary mortal must keep working away at his own potato-plot' (Naden 1883c: 85). Inevitably, if individual focus becomes too narrow, this does not benefit the evolution of society, much less the individual. Society will polarise along intellectual and physical lines. It is intellect that most occupies Naden because it is here that inequalities are most manifest: 'The very democracy of intellect is parted from outer barbarians by a gulf far deeper than that which parts the aristocracy of wealth or rank from social inferiors' (Naden 1883c: 85). More powerful intellects can effect changes within Spencer's societal organism. Naden knows that intellectual improvement and social mobility is now possible but 'where there is rough work to be done, there must be rough

workers to do it' (1883c: 85). The polarisation Naden fears happens when the learned scientists, thinkers and writers spend their time arguing intellectually for and against each other's theories whilst ignoring the masses and society's real needs. As society divides itself along intellectual lines rather more than on the class-based structures of previous centuries this fractures rather than unites. From a physiological perspective, Naden seems to be arguing that healthy minds and bodies are what society needs from all its citizens, rather than the domination of one over the other. To focus only on the intellect is to impoverish the next generation since, in a Lamarckian version of the inheritance of characteristics 'They are the fathers and mothers of the next generation, to whom the enfeebled constitution and excited brain will descend as a heritage of woe' (Naden 1883c: 87). It is a seductive proposition, though, to produce a society that is well-educated and culturally empowered: '"Look," they say "at the books poured from the press; contemplate the conquest of nature achieved by modern science; behold the literary and artistic luxuries of other days, now brought within the range of the shopman and the mechanic"' (Naden 1883c: 87).

Underlying the success of Victorian science and culture, however, Naden seems to be questioning whether, in our pursuit of intellectual nourishment, society is evolving successfully. Naden qualified her own essay in a letter written from Rome, which aimed to correct any 'faulty reasoning'. She uses the example of the ape: as apes developed a form of bipedalism the use of their arms had various positive physiological benefits that enabled more activities; for humans, on a different branch of the evolutionary tree, this eventually led to work. Naden contrasts this with someone in a sedentary occupation who would evolve in the opposite direction and become a physically weak specimen:

> It is of course impossible to stop voluntarily in the race of so-called civilisation, but the questions whether this race is towards a desirable goal, and whether we may not some day be *compelled* to stop or turn in a different direction, are in no way solved by this truism. (Naden 1883d: 128)

Ultimately, the answer Naden gives to her own essay title 'Is the Increasing Predominance of Brain over Muscle Conducive to National Welfare?' is no. Due to excessive degrees of intellectual specialisation widening gaps are appearing between strata of society and in turn too much brain-work reduces the physical side which in turn will weaken our constitutions. John Holmes's reading of the enigmatic ending to her essay is compelling: 'For Naden, thought without enjoyment, the brain without the heart, science without play and romance, are not worth having' (2009: 197). Underlying the emotional resonances that Holmes draws out I would add Naden's overarching Spencerian concern about how society can evolve and the place of physical prowess, individual emotion and intellectual ability within that evolution.

In evolutionary terms, the emotional and the cerebral rather than the physical are explored in Naden's next essay 'Schiller as a Philosophic Poet' (C.C.W.N. 1884). Naden sees a duality between poetry (representing emotion) and serious thought (representing reason) and argues that in philosophical debates poetry occupies a peripheral but important place. Poetry excites the emotions and it 'supplies data which cannot be neglected in any synthetic view of truth' (C.C.W.N. 1884: 1). Poetry that uses imagination, therefore, can reach out to people and show 'scientific and philosophic conceptions in an emotional light' (C.C.W.N. 1884: 1). Great poetry is capable of unifying emotion and reason and Naden believes that Schiller is a great poet who achieves this feat. Schiller's exploration of ontological solutions to the mystery of life appealed to Naden's interest in the evolution of the mind. Schiller often explores the way our inner self (responsible for emotions such as how we love and feel) acts with external forces that shape the cosmos to coalesce into happiness and melancholy or hope and despair. This reflects our personal feelings and desires about the external world. When Naden proclaims: 'The motto of all his later work might well have been– "For the Kingdom of Heaven is *within* you."' (C.C.W.N. 1884: 2),

this has some parallels with the Hylo-Idealistic notion of God existing within everyone as energy rather than as a supernatural being.

In Naden's essay, her translation of Schiller's poem 'Fantasie an Laura' ostensibly has the overarching motif of 'love conquers all'. This translation, however, conveys the point that Schiller melds science and love together in his poetic delineation of the cosmos. Overall, what Schiller does that so intrigues Naden, and which she attempts to convey in her translation, is to fuse together the cosmos, nature, life and love. From the building blocks of matter, atoms seek atoms in the way that humans seek friendship and love and the two are juxtaposed here:

> Thirstily each planet-globe revolving
> Drinks the sunlight's golden rain:
> Life it quaffs from out that fiery goblet
> As the limbs draw vigour from the brain.
>
> Every atom seeks its kindred atom;
> Linked in friendship firm and sure;
> Love unites and guides the spheres of heaven,
> Constellated worlds by Love endure. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 2)

Naden argues that it is the laws of attraction (both sexual and chemic in nature) that apply both to the cosmos but also to our own 'Kingdom of Heaven'. Opposites such as sin and repentance, fortune and envy, pleasure and death have a relationship of attraction and repulsion that is both fearful and mysterious.

Naden also includes a translation of part of Schiller's poem 'Secret of Reminiscence' and love for Laura is still the theme. The final stanza seems to suggest that God has now faded away completely or has become irrelevant:

> Laura, weep! This God has perished now,
> We are but his ruins, I and thou;
> Yet insatiate thirst is thine and mine,
> These dissevered fragments to combine
> In one life divine. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 3)

The spirit of God continues as part of a unifying presence that represents a new form of divinity.

In Schiller's 'Ideals', Naden laments the fragility of life. Yet, the optimism and richness of the first four lines of her translation suggests that comfort is to be found in the awesomeness of the cosmos and our individual worlds within the natural world. Naden's translation shows how Schiller laments lost youth in a spirit of calm resignation:

> A universe of mighty yearning
> Throbbed in my bosom's narrow bound;
> In deed and word, in shape and sound.
> How great this world, how nobly fashioned,
> While yet the bud unsheathed it all!
> How few, alas! the opened blossoms,
> And even these, how weak and small! (C.C.W.N. 1884: 4)

The nature of the true reality of all this wonderment is explored in 'The Artists' where Schiller considers the objective and subjective ways that we perceive and what this means ultimately for the human quest for truth and beauty:

> E'en as the pure white beam from heaven
> Breaks in the rainbow's sevenfold light,
> And as the rainbow-colours seven
> In stainless sunshine all unite,
> So ye who please by bright disunion,
> Whose thousand glories glance and gleam,
> Truth joins you all in one communion,
> Ye blend in one uncoloured beam! (C.C.W.N. 1884: 5)

The sun emits white light from the electro-magnetic spectrum that we can see but also emits much more infra-red light that we cannot see. White light is a combination of different parts of the spectrum that become visible if one shines a white light into a prism; the rainbow is an example of the visible part of the electro-magnetic spectrum. For Schiller, we view art subjectively, but we need to be able to peer behind visible colours to understand the objective truth and beauty of what we see; Naden's statement in this context invokes the Hylo-Idealistic notion of our individual minds creating our own realities based

upon sense perceptions. Yet, perhaps she is suggesting that behind our individual imaginations there is a more lasting ideal waiting to be discovered:

> The prismatic colours are now the varied effects and methods of art, and the white light is the highest and the most permanent ideal of Beauty and Truth which the human mind can find, and which retains its general outlines throughout the changing play of temporary ideals. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 4-5)

Some people seek comfort and shelter from the awesomeness of the cosmos and nature through sacrifice or self-denial, as we saw in poems such as 'The Carmelite Nun'. In 'Resignation' Laura's suitor gives up his earthly youth in the expectation of external life that, one assumes, he hopes to spend with his love. Naden has rejected such beliefs since the 'Philosophy' Notebook (1878) and she makes this clear in a veiled swipe at religion:

> Thy life-long hope has paid thy labour's worth,
> The joy of faith was thine appointed lot.
> Ask, if thou wilt, the wise ones of the earth:
> Who robs the passing moment of its mirth,
> Eternity repays him not. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 6)

Naden briefly summarises Schiller's 'The Walk' as being about **'**The evolution of society through periods of war, commerce, art, science, philosophy' (C.C.W.N. 1884: 6). Unsurprisingly, she focuses on science in the context of man seeking to discover nature's mysteries:

> But in his quiet chamber, designing circles symbolic,
> Thoughtful the wise man sits, and proves the workings of mind,
> Tests the forces of matter, the hates and loves of the magnet,
> Following sound through air, through ether following light,
> Seeking in marvels of chance the definite law that directs them,
> Seeking 'mid whirling events the one immovable Pole.
>
> So to the wondering gaze dissolves the mist of illusion,
> So shall the phantoms of night cede to the dawning of day. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 6)

The story of 'The Walk' could serve as the backdrop to Naden's entire oeuvre and as such her summing up of its grand sweep is worth quoting in full:

> But with the triumphs of reason comes the too indiscriminate craving for liberty, and wild desires join in the cry. The foundations of truth seem shaken; even conscience, the inner God, falters and fails. Then comes an age of shams, then a revolution. The

> people rise in the wrath of misery and seek lost Nature in the ruins of cities. From these forebodings the poet returns for comfort to the lovely scenes around him. Man's will and man's action are in a state of perpetual flux, constantly changing their form and their purpose. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 7)

From such a vantage point, Naden begins her conclusion of this essay with a brief look at a complex poem 'Life and the Ideal'. Naden sees echoes of Schiller's essay 'On the Sublime' in the poem and this has important ramifications for her own philosophy**.** For Schiller, the sublime is a spiritual concept that recognises the existence of our autonomous minds when it comes to spiritual and moral improvement. It is a form of self-love that resists egotism and which, rather than accepting reason's fear of nature, offers transcendence to a state of superiority over nature. Naden admires Schiller because he offers a way in which human frailties (that she often explores in her own poetry) can be overcome through a self-love that is not narcissistic and which does not violate morality or natural laws. Hylo-Idealism's focus on recognising the importance of matter whilst foregrounding the importance of the self, the individual mind and a God that is within each individual mind, uses Schiller as a touchstone for its philosophy: 'Since the fetters of time and space bind only Matter, while the pure Form wanders "Godlike among Gods," the only Heaven accessible to man is to be found within himself: it is the "realm of the Ideal"' (C.C.W.N. 1884: 7). The key for Naden, though, was not to assert superiority over nature but to be part of it, where matter meets the spiritual mind in one unified whole:

> The laws of your ideal world, including all essential truth, must include the laws of the universe. Conform your being to these, by recognising them as parts of your own nature, and they will no longer appear as restraints upon free-will, but as its natural expression. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 8)

Finally, Hylo-Idealism is encapsulated in two lines of 'Life and the Ideal'. Naden translates Schiller as urging the individual to see God as existing within oneself and in this way, the supernatural becomes redundant:

> Take the Godhead into thine own will,
> And he abdicates the cosmic throne. (C.C.W.N. 1884: 8)

This philosophy of the self from Schiller, so admired by Naden, is evident in her essay 'Culture and Science. A Review of Professor Sonnenschein's Address' (C.C.W.N. 1885b).[51] Edward Sonnenschein was a highly respected and influential Professor of Greek and Latin at Mason College between 1883 and 1918. Naden does not so much review Sonnenschein's address as quote a part of it. Of the twenty-six lines of her review, half is given over to what he said, although her quoting large passages in this way was a typical practice for the time. Naden's main objective is to urge readers to seek out a copy of the full address, when published in the November 1885 edition of *Macmillan's Magazine*. It is illuminating for the light it shines on late nineteenth century attitudes towards science and its relationship to culture and it is a passage that one could imagine Naden herself composing:

> but culture, or "the complete spiritual development of the individual," cannot be fully attained by the analytic methods of science. The synthetic spirit of poetry or philosophy must weave the isolated parts into a living whole. The poet's aim is to build up again in his own soul the unity of things, which science is always breaking down. It is further suggested that "some of the highest generalisations of science are in a large degree of the nature of poetry–anticipations of nature, conceived and believed long before anything like adequate evidence was forthcoming. (C.C.W.N. 1885b: 113)

In this passage, can be read a justification of Darwinian scientific empiricism and the importance of a Spencerian belief in seeing an organic unity in societal progress. The essence of the quotation, though, is a need for the poetic imagination to express itself in cultural encounter with both science and philosophy and, in this way, it finds its true place in Hylo-Idealism; it is for this reason that Naden quotes Sonnenschein so extensively.

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[51] Naden published one other review, as Constance C. W. Naden in 1889, entitled 'Macbeth at the Lyceum' in the *Mason College Magazine*, 7, March, pp.23-27. The acclaimed production was produced by Henry Irving, who also starred as Macbeth, but was noted for Ellen Terry's performance as Lady Macbeth. It opened on 29 December 1888 and ran for one hundred and fifty performances during a highly successful run. Naden was enthusiastic about Ellen Terry's performance but not Irving's.

The anonymous publication in the *Mason College Magazine* of Naden's short story 'A Modern Apostle' (Anon 1886) precedes the publication of Naden's long poem of the same title in 1887. The short story lacks the nuanced intricacies of the poem's evolutionary narratives, religious fundamentalism, political and social challenges, and instead focuses on two potential lovers; Arthur Burnet, a Pantheistic Socialist, skilled debater, seeker of the truth, single-minded but not vain and Claudia Westwood who sounds so much like a physical and mental description of Naden, that her introduction, is worth citing in full:

> She was tall and slender; straight featured, grey-eyed, light haired, with a delicately fair and pale complexion; her dress was always plain, but not aggressively so, suggesting an absence of aesthetic theory rather than any conscious renunciation of the pomps and vanities. If she was in any way attractive, it was by no fault of her own, but by a treachery of Nature. Undemonstrative, and apparently unpoetic, her clear mind and instinctive sincerity sometimes made her seem hard and intolerant; yet she was in reality exquisitely sensitive, immediately repenting of the best-deserved harshness, and appearing cold in the very effort to suppress her irrational remorse. (Anon 1886: 47-8)

Madeline Daniell's description of Naden corresponds closely to the initial part of the passage above: 'tall, slender, pale, with dark hair; a delicate, yet powerful face, with singularly clear blue-grey eyes' (Hughes 1890: 59). Hughes, himself, in echoes of the latter part of the passage recalls 'a kind of deep seriousness or natural shyness' (Hughes 1890: 58). Another life-long friend, Mrs. F.T.S. Houghton identifies, albeit in patriarchal language, several of Naden's admirable qualities that also echo the passage: 'Like George Eliot, she had the intellect of a man, but the heart of the most womanly of women, and though science and literature were much to her, love and friendship were infinitely more (Hughes 1890: 63). Comparisons with Eliot were made on several occasions and I discuss these in Chapter Four. Houghton's comparison is apposite because Naden's description of Claudia resembles Eliot's description of Dorothea Brooke at the beginning of *Middlemarch*:

> Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less

> bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; (Eliot 1988: 29)

The similarities between the characters of Claudia Westwood and Dorothea Brooke suggests that comparisons between the two writers are not as incredible as might initially appear. Just as pantheism proved too narrow for Claudia so too did religious teachings prove too narrow for Dorothea. Given these similarities and the comparisons made between the two writers by Naden's friends, it seems likely that Naden read and was influenced by Eliot.

A brief appearance from Claudia's father also may have biographical resonance presenting a character sketch of Naden's father, Thomas. These semi-autobiographical details could explain why the short story is anonymous. Like the student in the poem 'Freethought In The Laboratory', Claudia, despite her intelligence, found science dull until it was infused with the quasi-religious zeal of Arthur's pantheism. But then Claudia has her doubts because 'Pantheism, however beautiful, and even sublime, was far too unsubstantial a theory to serve as the guide of life and the basis of social reform' (Anon 1886: 50). Like the rioting mob of the poem, Claudia recognises that pantheism won't feed starving people, nor will it educate them to see that there is an alternative to religion, as her trenchant remarks attest: 'Don't you see that you never can change the nature of things by bringing the great god Pan into the play?' (Anon 1886: 52). As with the poem, pantheism is too nebulous a concept for people dealing with the realities of life. What the poem details and what the short story alludes to, is that a new philosophy is required to deal with the seemingly harsh and uncaring nature and the realities of the struggle for survival. The fact that Arthur and Claudia are not reconciled is a source of pain and a sign perhaps that Naden was not herself entirely convinced by pantheism. She also retains oblique references to the challenges of sexual selection when potential partners are equal in intelligence or education, as we saw in the 'Evolutionary Erotics' poems: 'I am afraid that Claudia was

never able to take comfort from this philosophy, but perhaps it was some compensation that to the end of her days she kept in her heart an unstained ideal' (Anon 1886:53). Yet just one year later Naden published her long poem 'A Modern Apostle' that, whilst still equivocal, presents a much stronger and more confident reconciliation of the opposing viewpoints of Alan and Ella in the face of pantheism's failure to win over the masses.

Our Corner – **1884**

In the late 1870s, the Freethought Publishing Company was founded by Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh. *Our Corner* was created and edited by Besant between 1883-8 and sold for 6d (See Brake and Demoor 2009: 9). This eclectic publication contained a selection of articles on politics, religion, science, travel and the natural world. In the 1st May edition, which Naden contributed to, articles included a regular section on socialism by Charles Bradlaugh; an article entitled 'The Duty of Blasphemy' by the radical secularist and freethinker G.W. Foote; and a serialised article about Giordano Bruno, a sixteenth-century Dominican Friar from Italy who, like Naden, was a polymath in mathematics, cosmology, philosophy and poetry.[52]

'Hylo-Idealism: The Creed of the Coming Day' (C.N. 1884c) is a secular essay that restates Naden's philosophy but through its implications for religious belief. Naden reiterates that God exists within each individual 'and in these grey thought-cells lives the God who says, "Let there be light," and there is light"' (C.N. 1884c: 276). Naden, writing as CN, is confident in her anti-Christian views as she asserts:

> I have spoken of the God within the hemispheres almost as though he were a separable being; but in truth this was mere "poetic licence," and the cerebrum is its own God. Paralyse the brain, and you paralyse the intellect; intoxicate the brain with opium, and you create within it a wondrous new heaven and earth; make the brain dead drunk, and you degrade the inner deity to the lowest of brutes. (C.N. 1884c: 277)

[52] Although Bruno's pantheism resulted in him being burnt at the stake as a heretic, it seems somewhat appropriate that Naden, as a nineteenth century polymath and pantheist, should contribute to this edition.

God, then, is no more than energy, a 'cosmic vitality' (C.N. 1884c: 277) that exists in the natural world. Naden fuses the Darwinian narrative of birds, insects, worms and damp earth, in their splendid dissimilarities, with the Spencerian narratives of them being utterly dependent upon each other struggling with the laws of nature that surround them: 'The parent[53] of light, sound, odour, also generates the fairest imaginings of the poet, the grandest generalizations[54] of the scientist or thinker, the noblest deeds of hero and of saint' (C.N. 1884c: 278). Naden's treatment of a supernatural deity is what she called 'shifting the centre of gravity' but she is cutting out the need for religion altogether. Whereas Darwin, after 1871, focused late Victorian attention on individuals and populations, Naden once again unites Darwinism with a Spencerian view about society in a world where religion has begun to fade away. The Darwinian narrative of the tree of life depicts a common ancestry and it is married with a Spencerian vision of the potential for humans to evolve in an adapted society. Yet Darwin had shown how the natural world afforded no special place for humans and he resisted such anthropocentricism. Neither Darwin nor Spencer's thinking necessarily implied progress, but rather simply adaptation to environment – an environment that might change, making a different species better adapted to survive. Darwin thought that the notion that any one group of animals, especially humans, was somehow higher than any other group was absurd. It was possible in Darwinism to progress so far in adapting to the environment but that could be reversed – there were no guarantees. Spencer accepted this, although he favoured the notion of human progress rather than decline. Naden was more inclined to Spencer's view and she believed in the potential, at least, for a progression to a better society. Such progress would be based on philosophy that 'is not only an organic necessity, but that it also possesses supreme

[53] Lewins added the word 'hylic' before 'parent' in the edited version of this essay that was included in *Induction and Deduction* (1890).
[54] The spelling in *Our Corner* was 'generalisations'.

intellectual and moral significance' (C.N. 1884c: 281). Darwinism was vital to Naden in developing her philosophy, a philosophy that had at its heart Spencerian evolution; the combination resulted in a sceptical, slightly detached, somewhat cynical and secular materialism.

By this stage Naden was so confident in Hylo-Idealism that she was adopting a tone of voice unimaginable just a few years before, claiming for her philosophy '*its complete reversal of the theologic standpoint*[55]; and its restoration to mankind of their ancient, pre-scientific, imperial dignity and freedom.' (C.N.1884c: 281).[56]

***Knowledge* – 1885**

Knowledge: *An Illustrated Magazine of Science Plainly Worded-Exactly Described* was founded by the astronomer Richard Proctor in 1881, to provide scientific information to appeal to all classes. This weekly magazine was initially competitively priced at 2d as a cheaper alternative to its perceived rival *Nature* at 4d, which still survives today. By the time Naden was contributing to *Knowledge* in 1885 it had become a monthly journal priced at 6d (having previously raised its weekly price to 3d) which was a typical price for a journal at that time. In the context of other similar publications, it has been recognised as, 'excellently produced, with fine illustrations, and highly educational' (Vann and Van Ardsel 1989: 22). For both Naden and Lewins there were two important elements to *Knowledge*: firstly, the broad-based appeal of the journal and secondly the fact that '*Knowledge's* most vibrant feature was its extensive correspondence columns' (Brake and Demoor 2009: 336). Lewins took great advantage of the fact that Proctor and his editorial

[55] Lewins added the italics in the edited version of this essay that was included in *Induction and Deduction* (1890).
[56] An indication of the importance with which this essay was viewed by Naden and subsequently Lewins was that it was published three more times; in *Humanism versus Theism* (1887), *Induction and Deduction* (1890) and the *Selections* (1893).

team were prepared to engage with contributors, whether as comments after articles or in *Letters Received and Short Answers*.[57]

In 'The Evolution of the Sense of Beauty' (Naden 1885a) Naden seems to desire to return to a pre-scientific age, when the Earth was a harmonious part of the natural world unimpaired by civilisation.[58] This essay is a confident assertion of Darwinism as she acknowledges the existence of humans' vestigial tail and pointed ears but it is an understanding of the essence of beauty that underpins the essay. Naden argues that beauty cannot be objective. It is highly unlikely that, for example, a Martian would be passionate about classical antiquity because it would be as alien to them as the perforated and distended lips of the Botocudos were to Western society at the time. Colour and form harmonise in nature to produce mutual attraction and benefit such as a water-lily attracting a bee through its colours whilst its form maximises the amount of pollen that attaches. Birds were of interest to Darwin in highlighting further some of the intricacies of the role of colour in sexual selection; in the *Descent* Darwin described how the peacock's bright plumage was a sign of male vitality but it was the female who sexually selected. Naden cannot conceal her delight at this reversal and she gives Darwin a prophet-like status – parodying the Bible as she does so: 'is it not written in the book of Darwin, in the book of the Chronicles of the Descent of Man?' (Naden 1885a: 308). Colour and form harmonise to produce what humans might regard as beauty but which, in the animal and plant and animal kingdom, is more akin to an instinct to avoid that which appears onerous: 'An

[57] *Knowledge* indulged Naden and Lewins in 1885 by publishing this essay and a series of letters from them. The letters are mainly spirited attempts to expound and defend Hylo-Idealism. Their lack of evolutionary narratives means that I have excluded them from my main argument. They are fascinating glimpses, however, into both Naden and Lewins's attempts to maintain Hylo-Idealism's credibility and so I have included them as information for future researchers in Appendix Two.

[58] Published in six parts over the April/May editions of *Knowledge* and read to members of the Mason Science College Union on 21 November 1884. This explains its uneven structure and the light-hearted tone. Naden attacks religion with a pun that she must found a sect which will be called the Pre-Adamites (reflecting scientific belief that humans existed before the Biblical Adam).

animal which found its vital activities irksome would soon succumb to more energetic congeners' (Naden 1885a: 343).

Naden equates survival with being healthy through the pursuit of the most fulfilling activities without over-exertion: 'The greatest pleasure is therefore derived from the maximum of activity with the minimum of fatigue' (Naden 1885a: 343). The most enjoyable activities will be those that vary their appeal, avoid stress or fatigue on the same sense or organ and effect a relative smoothness of motion that do not require constant readjustments: 'The greatest well-being is derived from the maximum amount of activity with the minimum of waste' (Naden 1885a: 344). These are generalisations produced to entertain in an upbeat manner whilst recognising the popular appeal of *Knowledge*. The effect Naden creates, though, is to make natural selection the engine of beauty but not the source: 'We can now see that the love for light and colour is not a product of natural selection, though without natural selection it could not have been perpetuated' (Naden 1885a: 344).

The rest of the essay attempts to understand the source of beauty within the engine of natural selection. Naden considers the role of the retina in the absorption of colours which are interpreted by the brain in such a way that we derive pleasure from things such as gradated colours. The same principles apply to things such as light and shade which stimulate us to go from activity to rest, and vice versa; this allows recovery and regeneration and a sense of well-being. In her consideration of form Naden states:

> Herbert Spencer observes that 'the delight in flowing outlines rather than in outlines which are angular, is partly due to that more harmonious, unstrained action of the ocular muscles implied by the perception of such outlines; there is no jar from sudden stoppage of motion or change of direction, such as results in carrying the eye along a zigzag line.' (Naden 1885a: 388)

For Naden, however, the merely aesthetic is never enough: 'Yet the purely physical gratification derived from varieties of form is probably less vivid than the corresponding

mental gratification' (Naden 1885a: 388). Naden is thinking about stimulation of the brain by changes of hue and shape in a way that is fresh without ever being disconcerting. There is a danger if humans are only driven by the aesthetic. Amusingly, albeit with a serious gendered message behind it, Naden juxtaposes the characteristics of a female hen being impressed with the smallest changes in one her 'lovers' with the ability and desire of a woman to alter her hair or clothing to attract a partner. Naden questions the nature of the more ephemeral human pursuit of fashion compared to the hen who can potentially pass on the improved characteristic to offspring. For the human Naden sees progression not necessarily in terms of aesthetic beauty but rather of mental capacity and the more advanced we become the more complex our aestheticism. She sees advancement in civilised society equating to a superiority of taste and argues the less well educated will often display a naïve fascination for the garish. As our intelligence and its associated aesthetic tastes advance Naden sees us settling into a calmer more serene state because of our increased retinal sensitivity: 'The highly-evolved organ, being in a state of harmony with external nature, craves for less variety than the imperfect and unstable organ, so that the most cultivated eye will demand little save what is supplied by the environment' (Naden 1885a: 414). Early societies gave primacy to physical attractiveness and prowess, as the body and the mind came together in expressions of the human form, so glorified in classical antiquity. Naden is interested to explore how this classical ideal evolved. She believes that the artist's mind is like a photographic plate absorbing and coalescing impressions such as power and wisdom to produce paradigms. When the populace (especially the educated) have evolved to a point where they have merely assimilated these impressions, without necessarily being aware of their significance, it is the artist who through the creative act must renew the essence and vigour to stimulate the senses over again:

> Our ideal of beauty has not been miraculously cast down from the skies as a golden image to be worshipped for ever and ever. It is a growing organism, sprung from simple germs, always evolving into more complex forms, varying, like all organisms, with its position in time and space, and with all the conditions which surround it. (Naden 1885a: 438)

Naden's evolution of beauty, then, has Darwinism as its touchstone but its essence draws upon Spencerism, in its gradual movement from the simple to the complex, as beauty evolves in the way that society evolves. In this complex interplay of the natural world and the creatures that inhabit it, beauty and its transformative stages continues to disturb and to fascinate but to always evolve.

The Agnostic Annual – 1885-1890[59]

In the burgeoning periodical markets freethinkers engaged with their potential readership by publishing their own pamphlets, journals and books. Charles Watts, having edited previously *The Secular Review*, first published *The Agnostic Annual* in 1884 at a price of 6d. Naden was a key contributor to only its second publication in 1885 and contributed three further essays. As Brake and Demoor have commented, 'the *Agnostic Annual* was the cornerstone of Watts's strategy to utilize the press to bring secularist free thought to new and more respectable audiences than those attracted by the publications of Charles Bradlaugh's militant National Secular Society' (2009: 8). Perhaps due to the serious subject-matter Watts made no attempt, however, to compromise on the dour format which barely changed at all during Naden's time. The content was solemn, monotonous and only lightened by the inclusion of advertisements of publications of interest including, occasionally, for the works of Naden and Lewins.[60]

[59] I have been unable to obtain a copy of *The Agnostic Annual* (1889) containing Naden's essay 'The Atrophy of Religion'. *The Popular Science Monthly* (Volume 34: 586) mentions the article as having been contributed by Miss Constance Naden. This suggests that by 1889 she had abandoned the use of her pseudonym (C.N.) and was confidently publishing under her own name.

[60] Naden's *What is Religion?* and Lewins's *Life and Mind* were advertised in 1886 and Naden's *A Modern Apostle etc.* was advertised in 1890.

Naden's first essay for *The Agnostic Annual* is 'Pessimism and Physiology' (1885a). It is an exploration of the nature of pessimism by equating it to blackness, at one end of a scale of colours. It is represented by Christianity and epitomised by the pessimism of Calvinism. Naden stresses the importance of religion's exploitation of blackness to engender fear and to present it as dominating light rather than co-existing with it. On the journey from blackness to light, for Naden, Buddhism[61] is an important philosophy. She mentions Buddhism, however, only to attack its first Noble Truth that our lives are painful because everything we strive for is a struggle and, ultimately, unfulfilling. In evolutionary terms Naden believes that the opposite is the case because harmonising with nature physiologically is the route to happiness, as she explains: 'Evolution has been possible because sentient beings have, on the whole, liked life, and taken delight in the exercise of their faculties' (C.N. 1885: 7). For Naden the evidence that creatures strive and indeed seem to display a zest for surviving means that the pursuit is certainly not unfulfilling:

> If any creature found it irksome to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, to touch, and had merely a passive dislike of pain, instead of an active liking for pleasure, that creature would very speedily drop out of the ranks, and its place will be filled by happier, and, therefore, more energetic, competitors. (C.N. 1885: 7)

This is so obvious to Naden that she ponders whether we have become less aware of such striving because we do it so instinctively. We are restless creatures, but we are optimistic too, and hope forms a key part of our physiological well-being. Naden does not exclude pessimism as an individual trait, however, but she denies it as an absolute condition of our evolutionary nature. This reasoning leads Naden to offer a counter to pessimism; Hylo-Idealism is located at the other end of her scale and exemplified by light, as she explains:

> Every man is a microcosm. He is a universe in himself, and enspheres in his own personality not only the colours and forms of nature, not only sky and flowers and trees, but also the images of other microcosms. It is in his own mind that he bears

[61] Naden appears to be mistaken in her assertion that Christianity was Buddhism's predecessor when it pre-dated Christianity by about five hundred years.

> about all those feelings and thoughts which he rightly or wrongly attributed to his fellow creatures. (C.N. 1885: 8)

Naden's lofty ambition is to replace the Christian Revelation with Hylo-Idealism's own source of revelation that comes from our inner consciousness:

> if sympathy be cultivated on the principles of Idealism, sorrow may be rendered tolerable and even tinged with joy. A feeling of solidarity with the rest of the human race helps us to take comfort from the thought that our own suffering is united by a thousand hidden bonds with environing happiness; that our private misery is a local ache incidental to the vital processes of the universe; that individual sorrow is a cosmic 'growing pain.' (C.N. 1885: 10)

Such consciousness brings with it the responsibility to ensure that we act always morally and it is this subject that Naden explores in her next essay.

'Shifting the Centre of Gravity' (1886) is not, as the title suggests, a scientific treatise but rather a brief exploration of the nature of morality, which Naden sees as being at the centre of humanity. This is partly through our sense of what is right and wrong, based upon what we have learned from our descendants, combined with an ability to love and a constant desire to seek the truth. Future progress in morality will be based upon a continuance of the search for truth, through science, rather than our previous blind acceptance of religious dogma. Naden does not attack religious doctrines as such but rather the dogma that spawned them. In this regard, it is the Athanasian Creed, and the severity of its warning that salvation can only achieved by strict adherence to what Naden sees as an unyielding and unprovable dogma, that is the focus of her ire. Its adherents' unbending insistence on the absolute truth of the Trinity and Incarnation is what shifts the centre of gravity dangerously away from our true purpose, which is the search for truth:

> This consists not in a blind or short-sighted acceptance of doctrines, but in love for truth, in conscientious selection and steady pursuit of the best means of obtaining enlightenment; in the honesty which embraces no belief because it is beautiful, or even because it is noble, but only because it is true. These generalisations may sound very simple; yet, could we but carry them out in perfection, we should come very near to the whole duty of man. (C.N. 1886: 9)

The statement above encompasses much of Naden's philosophy throughout her life and, despite this brief essay lacking the evolutionary narratives that were her trademark, it successfully conveys the passion with which Naden pursues her science and philosophy. In the pursuit of the truth, based on a post-Darwinian, Spencerian future, the re-setting of the centre of gravity requires courage to resist dogma. It demands instead the adherence to morals that put honesty and fair-mindedness at the very centre of our evolutionary progress.

Naden's final posthumous essay for *The Agnostic Annual* 'Are Miracles Credible?' (1890) is a short and amusing piece, in the form of a Socratic dialogue, between a defender of T.H. Huxley's supposed position that miracles are possible and a sceptical questioner. It is probable that Naden wrote the essay as a response to Huxley's statement, 'no event is too extraordinary to be impossible; and, therefore, if by the term miracles we mean only "extremely wonderful events," there can be no just ground for denying the possibility of their occurrence' (Huxley 1887: 131). Naden's essay, though, ignores Huxley's previous statement in which he clearly recognises the problem that this presents:

> To sum up, the definition of a miracle as a suspension or a contravention of the order of Nature is self-contradictory, because all we know of the order of nature is derived from our observation of the course of events of which the so-called miracle is a part. (Huxley 1887: 131)

As a scientist, however, Huxley is concerned that it is wrong to reject something just because we cannot explain it. Naden's essay is an attempt by the interlocutor to drive Huxley's defender into a corner. This is achieved by securing an agreement with the defender that, due to the constancy of the laws of nature, all we will ever be able to explain is that miracles are credible:

> The postulate that cosmic relations are constant lies at the foundation of reason, so that we cannot rationally believe in any variation of sequence till we find some constant relation, according to which the sequence may vary. Then the "miracle" would cease to be a miracle, and would take its place in an expanded order of nature. (Naden 1890d: 25)

Ultimately Naden's answer to her own question 'Are Miracles Credible?' is yes but that miracles cannot be possible. Her pedantic and semantic repost to Huxley's statement foregrounds her contention that a discovery of a so-called miracle will simply lead to it being incorporated into what we know about nature. This, for Naden, is the way our minds evolve in nature and brings the possible and the credible together synonymously in the material world and the cosmos.

***Midland Naturalist* – 1888-1890**

Naden's ideas about physiology acting together with the environment to create evolutionary change shows that it is Spencerian organic evolution that dominates her later thinking. This was an immense subject that Spencer wrote about for most of his career. It is not surprising, therefore, that Naden made the following comment about a paper that she had presented to the Mason College Physiological Society on 8 February, 1887: 'I read a paper on 'Volition' at the Physiological [Society]. It was very dry, I believe. Several people spoke afterwards to the effect that they had profited extremely, but hadn't understood a word' (Anon 1890: 54). Naden's humorous remark concerns a paper that was eventually published in *The Midland Naturalist* in 1888. Her subject matter is indeed dry even for physiology and psychology students. It is illuminating, however, for the evolutionary narrative about animals' ability to self-adapt to their environments through the concept of food absorption. Whether this can be attributed to Darwinism is, she feels, debatable: 'Indeed, this power of organised tissues may perhaps be regarded rather as a condition than as a product of Natural Selection' (Naden 1888: 112). As with 'The Evolution of the Sense of Beauty' Naden often sees Darwinism as an engine of change but not the source. It is to Spencer that she now frequently turns for explanations of evolution that go deeper than natural selection.

The increasing influence of Spencer is further evidenced by two essays 'The Data of Ethics' (*The Midland Naturalist*: 1887)[62] and an address that Naden gave two months before her death 'The Principles of Sociology' (*The Midland Naturalist*: 1890).[63] At the beginning of both essays Naden has inserted a picture (Fig 5). Julia Raymond Gingell states that the picture was designed by Herbert Spencer to be a symbol of Evolution and it was drawn by a J.R. Clayton. Spencer had it impressed upon the cloth boards of all his books that constituted the *Synthetic Philosophy* series (Fig 6). Gingell explains the picture:

> Beneath are crystals representative of the igneous rocks that have their source in the interior of the earth, and of the debris of which the geological systems are built up that constitute the solid crust of our globe. Superimposed are the alluvial soil and recent mould. Springing from the latter are two forms of vegetable life–*Cryptogam* (non-flowering) and a *Phanogam* (flowering) plant respectively. The latter is a dicotyledon, the highest form of vegetable life. This appears in leaf, bud, flower, and fruit, the seed dropping from the capsule. Feeding upon the flowering plant is a form of invertebrate life. Creeping up the stem of the plant is the *larva* (caterpillar); suspended from the central part is the *pupa* (chrysalis); and resting upon and crowning the flower is the *imago* (perfect insect). (Gingell 1894: Introduction)

Fig. 5

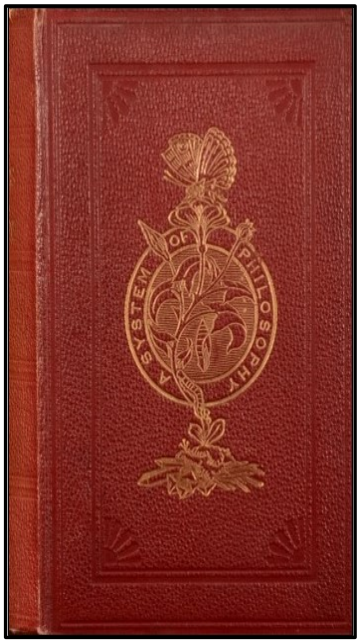

Fig. 6

[62] *The Midland Naturalist* (Volume X, 1887: 59-63, 92-97). The essay was an address to the Sociological Section of the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society at Mason College on 22 February 1887. A pamphlet was published also called 'The Data of Ethics' (1887) by Cornish Brothers. It was finally published as 'Evolutionary Ethics' in *Induction and Deduction* (1890) and it is analysed in Chapter Four.
[63] Delivered as an address to the Sociological Section of the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society, on the occasion of the opening of the session, 22 October, 1889.

‘The Principles of Sociology’ reflects the influence that Spencer’s own *Principles of Sociology* had been exerting on Naden since Volume I was published in 1876. Naden’s address is an exhortation to the society to devote more time to developing an understanding of Spencer’s Sociology. Like any other scientific discipline, Sociology requires rigorous data collection, analysis and theorising; failure to do this leads to the sort of religious teaching, based on creeds, that is unable to stand up to scrutiny: ‘If, without such knowledge, the principles are taken on trust, they change their character, and are transformed into dogmas, of no more avail for intellectual nutriment than the driest books of theology’ (Naden 1890a: 28).

The result of applying scientific rigour to understanding Spencer’s *Synthetic Philosophy* will lead to a holistic view of evolution and one which positions natural selection as an important part of a much greater whole. As Naden explains: ‘No conception of the formation and growth of societies can ever spring up until we have learnt to view the physical universe as a network of cause and effect, of action and reaction’ (Naden 1890a: 28). These concepts frame the chapter from Spencer’s *Principles of Sociology* entitled ‘Primitive Ideas’. Spencer did believe in human progress in a way that Darwinian evolution did not. He did not view it as inevitable, though, and allowed that some societies would regress depending upon prevailing conditions before progressing again and so the cycle could continue and evolve. As Naden explains: ‘Not possessing the solution of these enigmas, we cannot know the full sociological significance of our own day or of any previous day, since part of that significance lies in the unseen future’ (Naden 1890a: 29). Ultimately, Spencer’s vision, that Naden supports, is to develop the ability to analyse, interpret and understand all the internal and external forces in the cosmos that shape the organisms that form societies that in turn evolve.

***The Scottish Art Review* – 1889**

In *The Scottish Art Review*, Naden writes about Robert Buchanan's verse drama 'The City of Dream'. She begins by bemoaning the tendency amongst the general readership to want literature to occupy the narrow boundaries of emotional storytelling. Such readers are unhappy when literature attempts to move outside its traditional focus into areas such as religion and philosophy. Yet, Naden says, whether it be the heroic paganism of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*; the Catholicism of the *Divine Comedy*; or the Protestantism of *Paradise Lost* and dissent of *The Pilgrim's Progress* or *Faust*, our forebears have had the courage to meld story-telling with the religion, science and philosophy of their day to produce great literature. Naden identifies current writing such as Mary Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, Alfred Austin's *Prince Lucifer* and the subject of her review Robert Buchanan's 'The City of Dream' as all exhibiting such courage and she applauds this: 'if they refuse to concentrate their powers on millinery and scandal, on balls and flirtations, and obstinately busy themselves with recent developments of the human mind, it would seem that the critic must acquiesce in their decision' (Naden 1889a: 332).

Robert Elsmere (1888) was a popular novel of the nineteenth-century and Naden's close friend, Madeline Daniell draws comparisons between it and 'A Modern Apostle' concerning love's abilities to transcend differences of faith (Daniell 1890: xi). Such similarities would have been apparent to Naden, but her foregrounding of *Robert Elsmere* in this article reflects the importance of its engagement with the subjects that formed her own evolutionary narratives and that so engrossed her throughout her life. *Robert Elsmere* is grounded in the loss of faith in Anglicanism of its eponymous character, in the face of his own immersion in German rationalism. Naden's own trajectory of a loss of faith was more closely allied to scientific empiricism but where *Robert Elsmere* and 'A Modern Apostle' closely resemble each other is in the principal characters' belief in the mechanism

for societal progress when traditional faith begins to fade away. In the novel Robert believes in the importance of helping the poor and uneducated through social work (Ward 1888: 68) and in 'A Modern Apostle' Alan's own attempts to preach to the masses to embrace pantheism in the face of their privations reflects his own response to religious doubt. Neither character embraces or considers atheism and this reflects Naden's own evolutionary trajectory that seeks to reject traditional religious dogma but to find a constructive liberal philosophy for embracing religion through science and philosophy.

In Alfred Austin's *Prince Lucifer* (1887) an agnostic, idealistic and freethinking Prince Lucifer woos a shepherdess, Eve, and fathers a child, out of wedlock, after having rejected his own people for their adherence to marriage and religion. After the child dies, Lucifer is persuaded to marry Eve but his own people eventually accept his rejection of religion and marriage and want him to rule over them again. Prince Lucifer was not well received; both *The Athenaeum* (Anon 1887a: 741) and *The Academy* (Cotterell 1887: 296) bemoaned the lack of drama in a play that they opined was no more than a long poem. *The Saturday Review* provides the clearest insight into why Naden admired *Prince Lucifer* and why she saw it in a similar light to *Robert Elsmere* by stating, 'and the drama closes upon a wife and husband united as firmly as ever in the bonds of affection deep and true enough to triumph over any differences of creed' (Anon 1887b: 706).

Robert Buchanan's background indicates why Naden found his work an interesting subject for review. His father was a freethinker who was interested in the socialism of Robert Owen but despite having been brought up in a dissenting tradition, Buchanan was religious. He was concerned that to abandon the notions of spirituality and everlasting life would leave an empty void. R.A. Forsyth has described Buchanan's dilemma as follows: 'The anguished struggle between emotions and intellect is here clearly apparent, and Buchanan spent most of his poetical life attempting to resolve this dilemma by trying to

formulate a theodicy viable in the urban-industrial environment' (1969: 649-50). Naden had attempted her own version of such a spiritual journey through the character of Alan in 'A Modern Apostle'. In 'The City of Dream' Buchanan, through the character of Ishmael, goes on a pilgrimage from a modern Victorian city to a Heavenly City, in the form a spiritual journey, to rediscover religious direction amid scientific materialism and industrial progress. Herein lies Naden's problem with the poem because, in his identification of Ishmael's journey with Bunyan's Pilgrim in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Buchanan states that it 'attempts to be, for the inquiring modern spirit, what the lovely vision of Bunyan is for those who still exist in the fairyland of dogmatic Christianity;' (1888: 363). Her response in the review is trenchant and unequivocal; these people, Naden argues, are those 'who can regard orthodox Christianity, with its stern Calvinism, its deep conviction of sin, and its everlasting hell, as a fairyland of aesthetic gratifications' (Naden 1889: 332). She also objects strongly to the section of the poem, 'The City Without God', in which Ishmael rejects the seemingly utopian modern city because, to inhabit such a city, would mean an abandonment of his search for the nature of spirituality; as Forsyth observes: '[its] ethos frustrates the religious aspirations to immortality which are the true motivation of his search' (1969: 651). Naden's idealistic response seems naïve in the light of the horrors to follow in the twentieth century often in the name of scientific progress:

> I refer to its gross caricature of the spirit and aims of modern physical science. The 'City without God' should rather bear the more positive title of the 'City of Man'; and it is at least highly improbable that a community governed on humane and hygienic principles would unnecessarily torture sensitive creatures, much less make a public exhibition of their sufferings, or extinguish sickly lives, unless on clear proof that the good of such a practice outweighed the evil. Nor would the citizens 'surge wildly' round a 'pallid wight' who chanced to utter the name of God, and denounce him as a 'blasphemer.' (Naden 1889: 333)

Naden objects to Ishmael's illogical rejection of the godless city and Buchanan's dislike of the dangers of scientific progress: 'Still, when all deductions are made, this powerful and splendid poem may find appreciation from readers whose convictions are as yet

uncrystallised, who are passing through some of the intellectual and emotional phases here depicted, and whose taste is catholic rather than critical' (Naden 1889: 334). Naden appreciates the value of the work but her final comment is condescending to the sort of reader to whom she feels it would appeal.

Miscellaneous Writings

Naden attempts to resolve the question of whether the spiritual and the secular are compatible in late nineteenth century society in *What is Religion? A Vindication of Freethought with an Appendix on Hylo-Idealism; or, the Brain Theory of Mind and Matter, the Creed of Physics, Physic, and Philosophy* (C.N. 1883).[64] Naden sees state religion, in a historical context, as often being associated with violence or political expediency, under the guise of inspiring divine love and the rule of law. She believes in a harmonious relationship between the governing elite and the populace that is not based on fear of a supernatural being or poverty. Religion has failed the people and society because 'Spiritual authority separated from temporal is the law without the magistrate' (C.N. 1883: 2). Such an ideal state has clearly never been achieved but Naden sees the possibility for change in this 'sceptical epoch,' (C.N. 1883: 6). Religion has spread into all areas of life, notably education and morality, but its usefulness is waning as it adheres to rigid dogma that allows no challenge to its authority; this is Naden's fear that she encapsulates: 'Our very existence as a commercial nation is diametrically opposed to the spirit of both the Old and New Testaments; and the denunciations of "Babylon, that great city," in the Book of Revelation, might well be uttered of nineteenth-century London' (C.N. 1883: 6). Naden does not appear, at this stage, to be advocating Lewins's or Bradlaugh's aggressive atheism because religion is so deeply entrenched in society (although it was undoubtedly beginning to lose its potency). In the face of scientific progress, a more passive secularism would be

[64] This long essay was published as a pamphlet but was also reprinted in *Further Reliques* (1891).

better able to tolerate and to seek compromises with religion. Bradlaugh, for example, had many supporters amongst religiously-minded parliamentarians who were also Nonconformists.[65] Naden acknowledges that almost everyone, including herself, grew up steeped in religion and this inevitably raised fears when expecting people to explore the unknown 'which present all the terrors of the untried, the obscure, the forbidden' (C.N. 1883: 8). Clearly, Naden believes that Christian faith is an inhibitor of scientific enquiry because at its most fundamental it rejects the pursuit of knowledge pertaining specifically to God's existence: 'the Church cannot allow her children the liberty of doubting the truth of her word' (C.N. 1883: 9). Given the inertia of religion, the challenges of the age will be met through science and philosophy. Recognising that in many minds this would suggest revolution Naden believes that, unlike revolutionary France, England has the political systems and people adept and skilled enough to prevent such horrors and will never allow the proletariat to simply assume control. For her, the heroes of the French Revolution were not the bloodthirsty mob but the thinkers whose ideas became subverted. Naden wants freethought to lead to a freeing of the chains of religious authority: 'to shake itself free from all control, violently to overthrow existing institutions in Church and State, and loudly to assert its independence of all political and religious dogmas held by the powers that were' (C.N. 1883: 17). The Darwinian language of struggle is at once shocking and violent and, even allowing for the impetuousness of youth, Naden's language seems entirely at odds with her earlier statement about secularism and religion working together more tolerantly. In her zeal Naden pushes to one side the dark side of revolutionary change and instead focuses on the morality of the freethinkers' striving for progress:

> It follows that none can be greater benefactors of mankind than those who set such ideas in circulation, and who endeavour to show, by theory and practice, that morality is not dependant for life and strength upon a 'creed outworn,' and that the

[65] Here Naden is alluding to the Bradlaugh incident. When Charles Bradlaugh was asked to affirm the religious oath; he refused and so was unable to take up his seat as Member of Parliament for Northampton in 1880.

> rejection of theological dogmas does not involve the defiance of moral laws, or even of social restraints. (C.N. 1883: 17)

Naden recognises that the rise of mercantilism also has a secular basis and she laments the lack of prominence given to philosophy but she is an optimist and remains convinced that the enlightened will eventually triumph:

> Freedom of thought will at first take delight in the exercise of its own fresh power, and will care little for the imperfections of the actual world, which makes the universe of ideas all the more sublime by contrast; but this purely intellectual joy will soon be followed by a passionate desire for the incarnation of Freethought in free action. (C.N. 1883: 16)

Pantheism's appeal to philosophers from Eriugena to Spinoza derives from its view of the universe as an eternal living entity with humans merely transient, finite and mortal within its awesome scale. Like religion, though, Pantheism is about seeing these fleeting states in an exalted, awestruck way; Naden sees this as applicable to human culture too. But for scientific and philosophical rigour, she argues, it is to materialism that energies must be directed and not 'in worship of the Absolute and Unknowable" (C.N. 1883: 23). Although her argument against the 'Unknowable' appears to run counter to Spencerism, her Darwinian narrative is unequivocal, and, in its evocation of her philosophy, restores Spencer to the fold:

> This Hylo-Idealistic conception of human nature cannot, in truth, be either new or startling to any cultured Englishman, since it is implicitly asserted in the Darwinian theory of evolution, which acknowledges no impassable gulf between man and 'the brute creation.' (C.N. 1883: 23)

Naden philosophises Darwin in her desire to harmonise with Spencerism in a consequent rejection of religion: 'If the primary germs of intelligence are evolved from a special organization, which produces, in its growing complexity, the different stages of mental development, we cannot invoke a supernatural agent to complete the process' (C.N. 1883: 24). Ultimately, matter, motion, light, electricity, chemistry and gravity is the source of consciousness not a supernatural being. Naden is an optimist and her vision is that a

science-based evolutionary philosophy can harness the power of the human mind to reach beyond anything that has been achieved in the name of religion:

> The creative power of man is not limited to the sphere of the intellect, but extends to that of religion; and the cerebral organ which evolved the 'superhuman' and the 'supernatural' may yet produce a consistently human and natural system of morality. (C.N. 1883: 27-28)

Naden's freethinking belief holds that, despite centuries of religious inculcation, tradition and political intertwining, it is possible to disengage our consciousness from religious belief. In this mercantile age, though, she argues, greed and selfishness have undoubtedly driven commercial success. Philosophical progress and harmony will balance the commercial necessities of life with the comforts and protections that society brings. Whilst not denying the importance of the self, we must consider our actions in relation to our communities, rather than whether what we are doing pleases a supernatural being:

> But in our own day, when art, morality, thought, politics, and education are finally separated from religion; when the living soul of ancient theosophies has departed; when the stern beauty of 'divine philosophy' has well-nigh ceased to attract even youthful votaries, our only hope of salvation lies in the conscientious endeavour to draw new life from nature, and to make science itself a well-spring of ideal truth. (C.N. 1883: 34)

Naden's point is that belief in the Darwinian theory of the evolution of plants and animals and the Spencerian notion of society as an organism comprised of individuals will present the best chance for progress to a higher level of civilisation.

This chapter has provided the first systematic analysis of Naden's essays and letters. After having studied her unpublished 'Philosophy' Notebook, alongside her published work, I will now conclude by summarising her views. The 'Philosophy' Notebook reveals Naden's early disengagement from religion. She was just twenty years of age when it was written; it reveals a young woman looking for a way to reconcile science and religion, whilst denying theological legitimacy to, what she believes to be, a harsh and unjust creed. Naden's scientific mind recognises the historical and emotional basis for religion but

believes that it is something that cannot be scientifically tested or verified and, therefore, must be denied. God is invisible and intangible and whereas it was once a heresy to challenge religion it is now science that is assuming the mantle of authority. This is problematical, however, because Naden's understanding of Darwinism posits that neither the *Origin* or the *Descent* offers philosophical answers to deeply entrenched religious morality. She admires Darwin's scientific rigour and the accretion of knowledge over many years that enabled him to publish his grand idea. Naden realises that even Darwin's accretion of a myriad facts was not, in the end, enough for a science-based philosophy. It is clear throughout the 'Philosophy' Notebook that it is the social theorist Spencer who ultimately influences her more than the empirical scientist Darwin.

Naden grew up in an age of agnosticism and it is likely that during the 1880s she had already read and absorbed Spencer's attempts to reconcile science and religion in *First Principles*. Naden gets her idea that evolution can be equated with both social and moral progress from Spencer and the belief that, in Roppen's words: 'industrial society, though never quite perfect, at some future time will approach very near to an ideal state, a state in which happiness individual and general is the normal condition' (1956: 38). Naden does not want agnosticism to appear as a new religion but neither does she envisage agnosticism as driving any form of revolutionary change. Roppen describes Spencer's agnosticism as a journey: 'His deism turned to agnosticism–a moment congenial to his age' (1956: 35). From the time Naden began writing she was never a deist, but Roppen's use of the word 'congenial' hints at compromise and Naden was certainly exploring how religion and science could co-exist. Lightman goes further, however, and he could be describing Naden as he writes: 'The new agnostics were in fact primarily attracted to the cosmic evolutionism of Herbert Spencer, and they often ranked him as Darwin's superior' (2009: VII 292). Lightman also believes that: 'the new agnostics were philosophically inspired by

Spencer's adumbration of the agnostic position in the doctrine of "The Unknowable", which appeared in his *First Principles*, the introductory volume of the *Synthetic Philosophy*' (2009: VII 294). Whereas Naden certainly conforms to Lightman's former statement she was not a supporter of Spencer's notion of 'The Unknowable' as she argues: 'Religion excludes reason, and *vice versâ*. Not to mention the *impossibility* of worshipping an unknowable mystery' (Naden 1890b: 152).[66] Spencer's notion was anathema to everything she had worked towards in science and philosophy and she could not support it.

Naden attempts a fusion of Darwinian natural selection and Spencer's view of society evolving progressively like an organism as it adapts to the environment. Naden's agnosticism resists attempts to anthropomorphise God because she does not see "him" as a supernatural being. Naden recognises that although God was fading away he had by no means disappeared from her era and so compromise was essential. Paradoxical, though, is her apparent lack of enthusiasm for absolute agnosticism even though she is clearly adopting a philosophy that was, at best, secular. This can, in part, be explained by her scientific mind and desire to seek an explanation for all phenomena. Naden rejects animism, dualism and the types of religion typified by the deism of Thomas Carlyle. Her personal response is to reconcile the seeming differences between idealism and materialism through her advocacy of Hylo-Idealism.

Naden's essays display an awe of nature and a desire for humans to harmonise with their environment which is pantheistic. Ultimately, her Spencerian philosophy is an optimistic view of humans progressing to a future state of harmony with nature. The absence of Schopenhauerian pessimism in her attempt to philosophise evolution, that I have already analysed (100), is antithetical to writers such as Thomas Hardy, whose

[66] This quote is from a footnote in *Induction and Deduction*. It was added later by Naden because it does not appear in the original essay 'The Philosophy of Thomas Carlyle' (1882).

readers thought his pessimism was taking away the comfort of a beneficent God. Naden's materialistic views deny the traditional notion of the immortal soul. She believes that, by grounding ourselves temporally and seeking a congruence with nature, we can achieve a pantheistic approximation of the soul. In such a temporal state Naden playfully considers the role of sexual selection within the evolutionary process throughout the essays and letters. The idea that human evolution could mean ever brighter colours and hues in our attempts to attract a partner is an uncomfortable idea for Naden. She contrasts this with the belief that as we evolve we become calmer as our mental capacity increased and this inevitably impacts upon what we see and appreciate in a more considered fashion. Naden wonders whether it is purely beauty that stimulates our senses or whether intelligence plays a key role. She recognises the challenges that this poses and the dangers of God fading away. Religion has filled a vacuum caused by a lack of scientific knowledge but now through the rigour of people like Darwin and Spencer it is possible to evolve to a better state. This state, however, cannot be achieved through science alone and philosophy will provide the key to reconcile religion and science.

In crafting her philosophy Naden is unequivocal that there can be no First Cause. She accepts that, until science proves otherwise, God can still be considered the creator, in the sense of being a cosmic vitality; an energy that began everything, but certainly not a supernatural being. This belief is what drives Naden in her uncompromising criticism of state religion and her allegations of its abuse of power over the centuries. Religion is now pervasive in all aspects of life but Naden sees its power as waning along with the fear of God. She envisions a society where the governors and the governed exist together in a state that is based upon what is best for the individuals within the organism of society. These views that dominate her later essays tend to contradict her early willingness to engage respectfully in a reconciliation with religion that I analysed in the 'Philosophy' Notebook

(1878) on p.135. Whilst this is an indication of a certain fluidity in Naden's approach to dealing with religion, it is clearly evidence, however, for a progression of her thinking towards a rejection of state religion. Such a rejection would, through philosophy, lead us to a state where consciousness could be disengaged from belief in the supernatural. By this stage Naden was fully engaged with a belief in a science-based evolutionary philosophy, with Hylo-Idealism at its core.

Chapter 4 – A Solar Myth: Afterlife (1889-1894)

This chapter focuses on the five years after Naden's death and analyses the extent to which Naden's close friends, academic acquaintances and the press helped to colour the subsequent perception and reputation of Naden. To assess the plethora of responses to her death, the first section analyses the personal responses of friends and colleagues who tended to foreground her poetic talents as being paramount; this section contains some unpublished letters from a family archive. Although the bulk of the personal recollections connect Naden and poetry, it is philosophy that dominates Naden's afterlife through the influence and efforts of George McCrie and Robert Lewins. To provide as balanced a view as possible, therefore, I also analyse some personal recollections where her philosophical talents were regarded as preeminent.

In the second section I analyse four essays[67] that were published posthumously in two books, *Further Reliques* and *Induction and Deduction* (edited by McCrie and Lewins respectively) to form the core of this chapter. These selections provide strong evidence that McCrie and Lewins were instrumental in the attempt to emphasise Naden's reputation for philosophy after her death. The determination of Lewins to preserve Naden's philosophical reputation is the most compelling factor in the fashioning of an afterlife. His motivations were to preserve the memory of someone whom he had taught and mentored but also, I suggest, for his own self-aggrandisement now that Naden was dead. Also, the essays are important because they form a vital bridge between the last works of the living, thinking Naden and her afterlife.

The third section contains analyses of the published obituaries of Naden for clues as to the extent of any fashioning by the reviewers. Here I especially focus on Richard Dale

[67] 'Pig Philosophy' and 'Geology of the Birmingham District' from *Further Reliques* (1891) and 'Induction and Deduction' and 'Evolutionary Ethics' from *Induction and Deduction* (1890).

and Richard Garnett. I choose the former because he knew Naden so well and the latter because his obituary of Naden comes so long after her death. This is illuminating in understanding why she was still being reviewed in the mid-1890s.

Finally, I return to the overall influence of her mentor, Robert Lewins. I posit the possible extent of his fashioning of Naden's reputation after her death, especially in relation to the *Complete Poetical Works*, but also his influence on the other publications mentioned throughout the chapter. Given the lack of literary criticism of Naden both during her life and since her death, I am breaking new ground in analysing these contributions from an historicist perspective to try to understand the motives of those who knew or esteemed Naden and to present my findings within their nineteenth century context. Overall, my objective is to gauge whether the version of Naden that has been passed down to us by these people is an accurate one. I will ascertain how far she was recreated and established in the evolutionary narratives of her own time and positioned for future evolutionary debates.

The outpouring of grief, affection and tributes that appeared after Naden's death were a natural response to the demise of a tragic but much loved, admired and highly talented polymath. For a writer who published relatively little during her lifetime, the five years after Naden's death in 1889, remarkably, saw six related works published, a Constance Naden medal struck and a marble bust commissioned that still resides today at the University of Birmingham. The books that were produced or commissioned, either by her mentor Lewins or by a circle of academics or friends, reflected a desire to project as positive an image as possible to keep her memory alive in both poetical and philosophical spheres. The first tribute was an affectionate homage, *Constance Naden: A Memoir* (1890). This four-part biography contains personal details from friends and examples of her talents chosen by the academic community. The final tribute to her poetry was the *Complete Poetical Works* (1894) but, in between these two important books, the remaining four

publications tend to foreground her philosophical essays.[68] This is important because, one hundred and twenty-eight years after her death, it is the poetic work of Naden that still attracts critical attention. Hylo-Idealism was a short-lived philosophy that did not long survive her death, or that of Lewins in 1895, and is not found in any major history of philosophy. Yet in the 1890s there was an underplaying of her undeniable poetic achievements and an over-stressing of her philosophical works. I will explore this aspect of the fashioning of Naden's afterlife later in the chapter but first it is important to consider some of the personal reactions to her death from those close to her.

Personal Recollections

Amongst the many personal recollections after Naden's death, a 'Memoir' written by Naden's closest friend, Madeline Daniell, displays a genuine desire to cherish her memory: 'All that remains for the most devoted of her friends is to keep her memory green, by striving to let the world know what it has lost, both in promise and in fulfilment' (Daniell 1890: vii). Daniell stresses the high esteem in which Naden's poetry was held:

> Lunching one day at Government House, [Calcutta] Lord Dufferin, himself a literary man and of a literary family–his mother being a distinguished poetess, expressed himself in the warmest terms of admiration for Miss Naden's poetry, saying, as many others have done, that having once taken up the volume they could not lay it down. (Daniell 1890: xv)[69]

Daniell's recollections, whilst still raw from the pain of Naden's death, appear to be honest reflections of a woman who was deeply loved, rather than an early attempt at myth-making:

> I subsequently found that she had in Birmingham a circle of girl-friends, all gifted in some way, as students, writers in the *College Magazine*, workers among the poor, or lecturers to them on sanitary and other practically useful subjects. Among these Miss Naden was the centre of affectionate admiration and example. They are among the deepest mourners for her loss. (Daniell 1890: xiv)

[68] The four works that I refer to are as follows: *Induction and Deduction* (1890); *Further Reliques of Constance Naden* (1891); *Constance Naden and Hylo-Idealism* (1891) and *Selections from the Philosophical and Poetical Works of Constance C.W. Naden* (1893).

[69] Dufferin had been Viceroy of India since 1884, and his impressive literary pedigree comprised of his mother's sister being Caroline Norton and his wife the granddaughter of Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

The Reverend Richard Dale was moved to write about both Naden's personal and poetic qualities: 'Had she lived twenty years longer, I believe that she would have taken a great and enduring place in English literature' (McCrie 1891: 236). Professor Tilden was, also, more of an advocate of her poetry than her philosophy. Although he was circumspect about making judgments in both areas, he provided the following comment in the *Complete Poetical Works*: 'I am not quite sure that I am prepared to argue that Constance Naden's *forte* was not poetry, but philosophy. Had she lived, I think we should have seen surprising developments in both directions' (Naden 1894: 3). As Tilden stressed in the *Memoir*, however, a key piece of evidence for the esteem that Naden was held was not only her academic achievements, impressive though they were, but the fact that she was made an Associate of Mason College – the first woman to be accorded the honour and, at the time of her ascension, the only person to receive it without any academic qualifications. Her certificate has survived and is published for the first time (Fig. 7[70]).

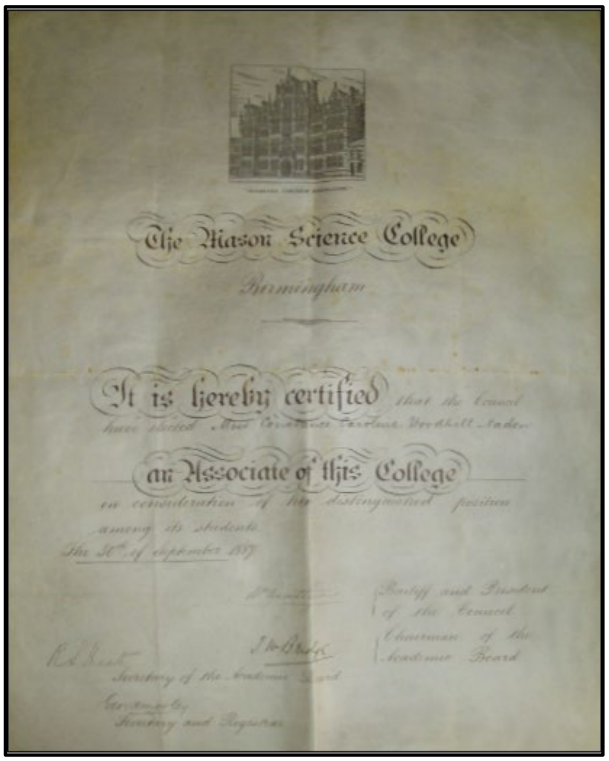

Fig. 7

The Reverend Ebenezer Cobham Brewer in the *Complete Poetical Works*, argues that poetry was her forte, and that her brilliance in philosophy did not presage a mass appeal: 'Miss Naden was a poet born, and made herself wise in science and philosophy. Her penetration was quick and keen, and she seems to have been about the only one able to grasp the difficult subject of Hylo-Idealism' (Naden 1894: 4); he also recalls:

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> Many have read about Hylo-Idealism, but have been surely puzzled to reconcile it with their foregone conceptions; but, then, every new phase of progress has this stumbling block as a rock of offence. Geology had a long uphill fight with prejudice, so had astronomy, so indeed had machinery; but Miss Naden, from the very first, grasped the whole subject, and tried, not without notable success, to popularise what, to her own mind, was completely self-evident. (Naden 1894: 5)

He goes on to state that:

> Others of her philosophical and scientific excursions show the same intuitive penetration, and probably, had her life been spared, her name would have been bracketed with that of Mrs. Somerville; as it is, H. Spencer says that Miss Naden and George Eliot, the two female Warwickshire poets and thinkers, are on a par, and he does not know where to find a third. (Naden 1894: 5)

Brewer ends with the assertion that 'Miss Naden's poetry has the true ring of precious metal; but, like Kirk White, Keats, and Shelley, her age was only a little, little day.' (Naden 1894: 5).

William R. Hughes, writing in the *Memoir*, is another whose affectionate writing seems to be an honest assessment of a brilliant student rather than an attempt at myth-making. Hughes declares that he thought of her as 'a fine and original thinker," (Hughes 1890: 3). He is prone to exaggeration, however, claiming that friends 'presaged for her a future equal to George Eliot herself' (Hughes 1890: 4) – though he goes on to admit that to compare Naden, who had died aged 31, with one of the foremost novelists of the nineteenth century, who had lived thirty years longer than Naden, was stretching credibility somewhat. Rather frivolously, Hughes describes a Mr. Bray of Coventry as having conducted a phrenological examination (much to Naden's amusement) after which he pronounced the skulls of Naden and Eliot to be very similar.

The examples above suggest that whenever Naden, as a person or as an academic, intellectual, poet or thinker, is written about she excited strong emotions. Hughes's claim that 'It is also not too much to say that no woman of the century, or indeed of any century, was better educated than Miss Naden' (Hughes 1890: 5) is grandiloquent and yet heartfelt. Clearly, Naden was one of the best educated of her generation, and it is true to say that her

German teacher, Dr. Dammann, thought her the most brilliant pupil he had taught. During her time at Mason College she undoubtedly flowered into a very promising intellectual: 'the genius-loci, in fact–and from the wide range of her knowledge, the lucidity and force of her intellect, and the richness of her illustrations, she never failed when speaking to impress her audience and carry complete conviction' (Hughes 1890: 21-22). Despite all this fulsome praise, though, Naden was not a specialist in any one field, but a polymath. This was evidenced by her winning the Heslop Gold Medal, the highest prize awarded at the time, for what was considered a brilliant philosophical essay 'Induction and Deduction'. Indeed, Naden seems to have recognised that the attention she received was disproportionate, declaring about her presentation to around one hundred members of the Sociological Section at Mason College in 1889, 'I felt rather overwhelmed last night, and am beginning to consider myself a sort of Solar Myth' (Hughes 1890: 54). Her modesty can be tempered somewhat in the light of Hughes' comment: 'It was impossible to be in Miss Naden's company without the unmistakable feeling that one was in the presence of superior intelligence' (Hughes 1890: 58).

In January 1890, Naden's father, Thomas, received a letter from the Birmingham Architectural Association that passed a resolution remembering in glowing terms 'his highly-gifted daughter Miss Constance Naden whose genius was so widely recognized' (Lloyd 1890: unpublished letter). A letter from Miss Florence Balgarnie, Secretary to the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage provides further evidence of the high esteem in which Naden was held by declaring that the following motion was agreed:

> That this committee have heard with profound regret of the death of Miss Constance Naden, who had evinced her warm interest in Women's Suffrage, by entering the ranks of those who publicly advocate the question. They deplore the loss of one who by her ability and zeal would have done so much to advance the cause of women, and they would respectfully tender to the members of her family their most sincere sympathy. (Balgarnie 1890: unpublished letter)

In a letter to Thomas dated January 1890, Ellen S. Haycraft-Ritchie, the Fabian socialist and writer, seeks to obtain any of Naden's philosophical writings for future publication: 'I have both her books of poems–but I understood from her–that she either had or was going to publish one or more philosophical essays or pamphlets–& it is about these I am anxious for information' (Haycraft-Ritchie 1890: unpublished letter). Ellen was married to David G. Ritchie in 1889, a Scottish professor, best known for his works on idealistic philosophy and politics, and for his interest in Darwinism. After Naden's death, Ritchie's works on social sciences were published in a series of $1 Scarlet Cloth editions and it is possible that this was the route that Ellen and David planned for Naden's posthumous publications. As Boucher and Vincent have noted, Ellen 'was also the sister of John Berry-Haycraft, a physiologist who wrote on evolution and questions of race' (2000: 238). He became Chair of Physiology at Mason College in 1881 and so Naden would certainly have known of him and one can surmise that it was from this connection that the friendship with Ellen began. We have no record of a reply from Thomas Naden and it is highly unlikely that the request would have been agreed to, given that Lewins was already planning to publish a collection of her essays as *Induction and Deduction* in 1890.[71] The letter provides evidence of the esteem in which Naden was genuinely held. Haycraft-Ritchie was one of a small group of people that were determined to preserve Naden's reputation for her philosophy rather than her poetry. There were others who believed that it was Naden's philosophical talents that would ensure that she was remembered and they set about guaranteeing that this would be the case.

(1) Creating the myth – George McCrie and Further Reliques

In this endeavour Naden had an indefatigable champion in George McCrie who describes her expansively:

[71] For clarity, it is important to distinguish between the book *Induction and Deduction* (1890) and the prize-winning 1887 essay 'Induction and Deduction' that forms the core of the book itself.

> Her rich and varied gifts summed up, no woman of mark in all literature has ever been so calmly puissant as a pure scientific thinker. She is beyond all feminine competition or comparison. Before completing her thirty-second year, when she died, she was the crown and perfect flower of intellectual womanhood. (McCrie 1891: 244)

McCrie's extravagant assertion that 'one is at a loss to know which most to admire, the brilliant and original thoughts or the classical repose of manner and expression' (McCrie 1891: xi) ignores the fact that her philosophy held little appeal to a general readership outside a small circle of intellectuals. McCrie's objective, though, is not to highlight the lack of appeal of Naden's philosophy but to foreground the view that she was ahead of her time and her audience. In so doing he directs readers to the *Further Reliques* and *Induction and Deduction* as exemplars of her philosophic talent (Hughes 1893: xvii). *Further Reliques* is a book in which he attempts, retrospectively, to establish Naden in her own time, as well as to claim for her an afterlife based on a philosophy whose time was still to come. It is, therefore, philosophy and not poetry that McCrie claims as her superior talent:

> Its quality is such as to dwarf, for the most part, the other departments of her activity. Poet she was, but her poetry suffers, not in comparison with the work of other women of letters in the same sphere, but with her own still more precious and enduring contributions to the literature of abstract thought. (McCrie 1891: xiv)

Here, one feels that he goes too far in his praise. Indeed, when McCrie asserts that 'Perhaps no collection of posthumous essays ever required so little of introduction or direction to be addressed to the reader.' (McCrie 1891: xviii) he is again being disingenuous, having spent the bulk of the introduction attempting to explain Naden's philosophy.

McCrie's later assertion (Hughes 1893: xvii) that Naden's poetry volumes were the only books published during her lifetime is true but requires some scrutiny. She published no books of philosophy *per se*, but of the eight essays published in *Further Reliques*, five had been previously published, either in journals or pamphlets, during her lifetime. McCrie would have been aware of this fact. Clearly, he was trying to adopt Lewin's *modus*

operandi, of trying to position Naden for future debates by asserting that had she lived she would have become a noted philosopher. The attempt is flawed due to the paucity of new material McCrie publishes in *Further Reliques* and the fact that the previously published essays, that he includes, had not enjoyed wide recognition.

McCrie's dismissal of the public as unable to appreciate abstract thought (McCrie 1891: xix) does not ring true. This is particularly the case when he quotes Herbert Spencer, who was immensely popular during his own lifetime, despite the impenetrability of much of his own abstract thought: 'Very generally, receptivity and originality are not associated, but in her [Naden's] mind they appear to have been equally great' (Hughes 1893: xviii). McCrie, in acknowledging the difficulties that Naden and Lewins faced in championing an abstruse philosophical theory, does not help his case by consistently arguing for Hylo-Idealism and Naden's pivotal role within it. The fact is that Naden's philosophy was based on a materialistic monism that was at least agnostic and, at most atheistic, and it was not one that found a large audience then and so was unlikely to survive in her afterlife.

McCrie's continued championing of Hylo-Idealism was overly optimistic. Given Naden's limited output as a poet, McCrie and Lewins were determined to claim fame for the young polymath based on a philosophical system that failed to find traction as idealism itself succumbed to its own challenges at the turn of the century. McCrie admits: 'If Miss Naden is only to be fully interpreted in the light of recondite, philosophical discussion, any attempt to popularise her character as a whole is and must be vain' (Hughes 1893: xviii). He recognises that, with the cult of personality, it is only once the philosopher has been absorbed into the mainstream that fame results and this is often posthumous. He believes that Naden's reputation will survive, despite her early death and her still abstruse philosophy. Since Naden tapped into three major strands of thinking at the time, spiritualism, agnosticism and materialism, it was likely, he argued, that her thinking would at some point be recognised and would come to the fore. McCrie's over-simplifying device

of shoe-horning every philosophical system into one of these three areas is none-the-less illuminating for the evolutionary narrative he conceals within it. In discussing Spiritualism in relation to Naden, McCrie states that in non-physical terms there are several paths that one can follow. One can simply continue to accept the 'continual presence of a Guiding Spirit, designed to lead men into all truth' (Hughes 1893: xxii). Or one could believe that spiritualism can itself evolve, which is where he seems to position Naden in this area. There are two other possibilities which McCrie dismisses as 'the pretended prophetical discoveries of the more fanatical of the sects, and that familiar intercourse with the Spirit-world which modern mediums profess' (Hughes 1893: xxii-xxiii). McCrie glosses over agnosticism by asserting that progress can only be made on what is knowable and presumably in the future discoverable. He sees evolutionary development as most evident in the final identified strand; materialism. His reasoning would have seemed sound enough to a late nineteenth-century scientist or philosopher:

> Hence, now-a-days, the distinction between Philosophy and Science must vanish, and a unitary system of Knowledge embrace the spheres of knowing and Being in their entirety, seeing that mental and material, organ and function, subject and object, thought and thing, are but aspects of an inseparable whole, of which Science, to be worthy of the name, must be the rationally complete envisagement. (Hughes 1893: xxiv)

This is where McCrie finally positions Naden, because at the root of all her thinking was a material universe and not one spiritually conceived through an omniscient creator: 'Knowledge, in its last recess, arrives, not at a First Cause or an Inscrutable Mystery, but at an [sic] Universal Synthesis–an Auto cosmic one, the sum and substance of all things and thoughts' (Hughes 1893: xxiv-xxv). McCrie's reasoning is that Naden should be remembered because of her Hylo-Idealism, which seeks to unite philosophy and science.

McCrie includes two previously unpublished essays in *Further Reliques*. 'Pig Philosophy: A Protest' and 'Geology of the Birmingham District'. 'Pig Philosophy' was an assault on 'The Ethics of Punishment' by W.S. Lilley, that had been published in the

Fortnightly Review of July 1889. The term 'Pig Philosophy', was coined by Thomas Carlyle and supported by Lilley; it was intended as an attack on utilitarianism. Naden considers Carlyle's term facile and questions whether we can take seriously a view that suggests a philosophy can be reduced to porcine modes of behaviour. Although Naden's essay is a defence of utilitarianism, its importance from an evolutionary narratives perspective is the way that she turns an argument about utilitarian ethics into advocating evolutionary philosophy in the face of Lilly's theology. It is the nature of determinism that divides Naden from Lilly. She feels that his argument is deterministic and that he seeks to deny freedom of choice or action to the individual. Naden is deterministic to the extent that she believes the universe acts according to fixed laws; but she believes that we have the responsibility and freedom as individuals to judge how to behave ethically within society. Lilly denies that freedom to the individual and instead assigns the judgement of ethical behaviour to a supernatural being.

Naden's explores the ethical nature of 'wrong' in the context of Lilly's essay and asserts that wrong is not wrong because God has said so: 'Reference to an unexplained supernatural source, and to an "organic instinct of conscience," does not suffice to prove rationality' (McCrie 1891:7). If one could remove determinism, we would be left with an empty universe; but if one takes away the religious notions of God, the soul and immortality, then everything still has meaning, provided one acts ethically in the context of human society. To a Spencerian philosopher like Naden, the link between ethics and society is inextricable:

> In the most literal sense, the individual man is unthinkable apart from the community, just as the community is unthinkable apart from the individual man. Remove, one by one, the bonds which unite him to his species, and you have stripped away all the qualities of the human Self, leaving a mere eating and drinking brute in the semblance of a man. No doubt, man was originally evolved from an eating and drinking brute; but the precise manner of this development is a hard question for Evolution Philosophy. But we may fully accept any theory of the Descent of Man without invalidating the fundamental truth that the individual is a social unit, and

> thus presupposes society, just as truly as society presupposes him as a social unit. (McCrie 1891: 9)

Here, Naden seems to understand that the rigour with which Darwin expounds his own theory is even more challenging in Spencerian philosophy. So, she establishes a distinction between Darwinian 'Descent' and its analysis of the individual and Spencerian 'Evolution Philosophy' and its study of society as an evolving organism. Naden's goal though is to incorporate Darwinism into Spencerian 'Evolution Philosophy.' Darwinism is a biological theory whereas Spencerism is a philosophy; this creates the imperative for understanding the complexity of human relationships and interactions with the environment to comprehend how an ideal society is achievable. Naden believes that for society to evolve, religious faith is no longer necessary; instead what is needed is a way to harness and then unleash the power of society to evolve. To truly evolve, though, everyone must be aware of nature's laws and conscious of the need to act ethically within those laws. Each generation must attempt this and in turn this flows into the next generation, as progression is made towards a new ideal. So, evolution is at the heart of Naden's ethics.

McCrie also published Naden's essay 'Geology of the Birmingham District' in *Further Reliques*.[72] Geology was of fundamental importance to Darwin both during the voyages of The Beagle and in the *Origin* (Chapters 9 and 10), but it was not then the recognised science that it had become by Naden's time. The essay is striking for the depth of learning Naden has clearly absorbed in such a short period, including expert knowledge of geological time periods. Also, in her recording of the geographic spread of plants and animals, and the discovery of fossils, she elucidates the vastness of time, the extinction of animals and the importance of understanding geology in relation to the overall development of the planet and evolution of life. Naden does not provide footnotes or offer

[72] 'Geology of the Birmingham District' was awarded the Mason College Panton Geological Prize that gave two guineas for the best student essay on local geology.

citations in the modern style and it is not possible to judge how much of her essay is original and how much is a derivation from existing knowledge. Nonetheless, this essay concludes with typical Naden levity by relating the development of Birmingham geology to the development of its large towns, agriculture, mining and the arts. This in turn creates the character of the people themselves, from farmers and miners to Shakespeare and George Eliot. The result is inevitably some confusion about what is being presented, although the overall mix of science and philosophy is still impressive. This essay illustrates McCrie's laudable attempts to position Naden as a polymath by including examples of her many talents, not just philosophy. Having set out to ensure that it is philosophy for which she should be remembered, *Further Reliques*, with its mix of previously published essays and esoteric new material, does not achieve its aim. Its eclectic mix of Naden's work fails to convince that Naden's philosophy was destined for a successful afterlife.

(2) Creating the myth – Robert Lewins and Induction and Deduction

Lewins published the most impressive contribution to Naden's afterlife because, from a philosophical point of view, it is *Induction and Deduction* (1890) for which Naden is best remembered. It is a book of essays, published and edited by Lewins as a platform for Naden's 1887 prize winning essay of the same name, which fills just under half of the book. Lewins augments it with five previously published essays, that I analysed in Chapter Three. *Induction and Deduction* is important for three reasons. Firstly, it is clear from Naden's 'Prefatory Note' that she had intended the essays to be published. The delay in publication until 1890 can be explained to some degree in that the year 'Induction and Deduction' was written, 1887, saw the death of her grandmother (and consequently Naden's inheritance of a fortune); her embarking on an extended foreign tour for nine months from September of that year; her move, on her return in June 1888, to London; finally, her purchase in 1888 of 114 Park St. London, which was not ready for occupation until February 1889. Her hectic schedule notwithstanding, the second reason for the

importance of *Induction and Deduction* is that in the 'Prefatory Note' Naden appears to be distancing herself from Hylo-Idealism by claiming it to be Lewins's own system. Thirdly, the two principal essays in the book were published posthumously and, therefore, Naden speaks to her contemporaries from beyond the grave via a publication delivered by Lewins. Consequently, *Induction and Deduction* is a nexus between the two worlds of Naden, the one she inhabited and the one her associates inhabited after she had gone.

It is important to consider the content of these two essays, therefore, as they are probably the final writings of Naden before her death. Both essays are complex philosophical monographs but I will consider them, in the context of this dissertation, for the evolutionary narratives they contain. *'*Induction and Deduction*'* is a long essay arguing for the Inductive method of reasoning over the Deductive method. Naden achieves this by guiding us through such influential philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Francis Bacon (the founder of the Inductive method), Descartes and Locke, Mill and Kant. She emphasises the mistakes of the Ancient Greek philosophers who began, in her opinion, from an incorrect starting point of imperfect observation, leading to erroneous interpretation and consequently the promulgation of mistaken hypotheses. The philosophy of science in the late nineteenth century has evolved, as she explains: 'When we wish to account for some new or seemingly abnormal phenomenon, we search through our store for applicable instances, and try to deduce the phenomenon from laws already known to us' (Naden 1890b: 98). In other words, we need to verify our conclusions in a scientific manner. This sounds obvious but Bacon, for example, believed that scientific methodology was too rigid because once a theory was formulated human beings were narrow-minded in doing their utmost to prove it to be the case. What is needed is a removal of any inherited dogma and a completely open approach to be adopted. Naden's issue with Baconian induction is that it is wrong to hypothesise about phenomena if the facts are uncertain. Bacon's approach is too narrow and ignores the fact that Victorian science is continually seeking to advance

knowledge through exploring uncertain facts and their inter-relatedness. The exemplar of this, for Naden, was Charles Darwin and the way that he conceived of natural selection. His observations on the relationship between surviving and extinct species led him to review existing theories for such events; explanations such as geological, climatic or man-made changes were all rejected by Darwin as insufficient. As Naden wryly comments: 'Darwin concluded that "causes generally quite inappreciable by us," but doubtless dependent on some slight difference in climate, food, or number of enemies, "determine whether a given species shall be abundant or scanty in numbers"' (Naden 1890b: 99). Darwin's observations of changes brought about by man, himself, through domestication of animals or the cultivation of plants led him to his hypothesis of natural selection. As Naden observes: 'The history of the Darwinian theory resembles *mutaits mutandis* [sic], the history of every advance in Science. The only way in which phenomena can be "explained," is by identification of the previously unknown with the known' (Naden 1890b: 100). Naden's conclusion by using Darwin, the only non-philosopher in the essay, rescues it from its overly idealistic vision of induction as only being successful if the scientist approaches the subject with a *tabula rasa* - a mind devoid of previous experience. She does not see Darwin as an exemplar of induction *per se* and it can be argued that, despite his scientific rigour, there is an element of speculation in natural selection that always dogged him and that this must be considered a deductive approach. Naden still believes in Darwin's methodology, if not always his conclusions.

The omission of Herbert Spencer from 'Induction and Deduction' is redressed in Naden's essay 'Evolutionary Ethics'.[73] In the Prefatory Note she writes:

> The inner bond of union between these two essays consists in the principle, implied where not explicit, that man evolves from his inner nature the world of experience as well as the world of thought; that, in fact, these seemingly rival spheres constitute but one Cosmos. (Naden 1890b: xxi-xxii)

[73] 'Evolutionary Ethics', is a more detailed update of a short paper, 'Data of Ethics', read before the Sociological Section of the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society.

‘Evolutionary Ethics’ is an elucidation of Spencer’s view of society as a living, breathing, evolutionary organism. Naden juxtaposes this Spenserian paradigm with her belief that morality is an intrinsic part of human nature. This is unlike the nature of animals which possess neither conscience nor senses of mercy or justice. Yet, animals, like humans, are also driven by a need to avoid pain and therein lies the route to evolutionary progress, as she writes:

> Evolution has been possible only by the correlation of pains with injuries, and of pleasures with benefits. For if an organism persistently preferred what was hurtful to it, and disliked what was beneficial, that organism would have a very small chance of surviving, and transmitting to offspring its suicidal peculiarity. You cannot, for instance transmit liking for starvation as a family trait. (Naden 1890b: 106)

Progress in evolution, if there can be such a thing, is towards prolonging life and the individual must adapt to both the physical and social environment. Antagonistic behaviour must be curtailed; cooperation and a willingness to behave beneficently, indeed spontaneously so, towards others is fundamental to individual and societal evolution. If evolution allows for unselfish motivation this is tempered by a degree of self-preservation or egoism: ‘Survival of the fittest has been the law of evolution, and works for general as well as for individual happiness, by ensuring the survival of the healthiest, and therefore of the happiest’ (Naden 1890b: 108-9).

But can individuals be both altruistic and egoistical? Naden thinks so because evolution is about adapting to the natural world: ‘That is, every mode of action demanded by social conditions must eventually become pleasurable to social beings, and as parental love is already an instinct, so the broader love, not only of country, but of the race, will in time become instinctive (Naden 1890b: 110). This raises the prospect of a potential for a golden age of ‘the completely adapted man in the completely evolved society’ (Naden 1890b: 111). Naden thinks that Spencer goes too far, however: just because evolution tends towards ideal adaptation with the environment, there is no guarantee that this will continue. Conditions in the natural world may deteriorate; we may find ourselves regressing to a

former state: ‘given an environment which demands progress, and progress will be made; but given an environment which requires degeneration, and degeneration will ensue’ (Naden 1890b: 112). Behaviours and relationships required to sustain such societies coalesce around the majority and not necessarily exceptional individuals or laggards. So, it is not the survival of the fittest but of the best adapted; this means that being part of the herd represents the best chance for survival.

As society begins to exert man-made controls over nature, it emerges from savage states, to civilisations with religious social and political systems. Morality takes time to evolve: ‘Nature, not man, must at first have been his best friend and bitterest foe; and not till the “controls” were approaching maturity could he feel the predominating influence of humanity’ (Naden 1890b: 115). So, by degrees we learn that it is in our interest to improve our behaviour and to accept the morality that society demands. Yet Naden believes that these civilising controls are nearing the end of their own period of evolution, especially the religious and political, and she is especially damning when it comes to religion: ‘Dogmas such as Predestination and Election, the Fall, the Atonement, Everlasting Punishment, cease to be credible as soon as they are felt to be useless’ (Naden 1890b: 115). So, as society changes through technology and communications, individuals become abler to challenge the seeming status quo, as Naden explains: ‘in all probability, the religious and political controls have passed their zenith of power; and that the social and natural controls, although capable of indefinite expansion, will not effect a vital transformation in the character of mankind’ (Naden 1890b: 119).

Spencer envisages a society in which survival rests upon cooperation becoming the *modus operandi* to such a degree that it is enjoyable, and Naden concurs: ‘for creatures must become gregarious before they can become social. The habit of flocking together conduces to the welfare and survival of the species, and the proximity of its kind becomes in some degree pleasurable to each member of the herd’ (Naden 1890b: 123). Herds, like

societies, evolve a rudimentary means of communication that evolves the means to announce feelings of pleasure, pain or alarm. Naden melds Darwinism and Spencerian ethics in her tracing of the development of such nascent societies through the emergence of sympathy and empathy. To support her argument, she quotes Spencer (1872: 570) in recognising the challenges to be faced through 'those "destructive activities, offensive and defensive," by means of which "each society has had to maintain itself in the face of external inimical agencies, partly animal but mainly human"' (Naden 1890b: 125). Co-operation becomes paramount between communities for them to prosper. Naden's discomfort with this Spencerian view is because it ignores the inevitable suffering of the exploited working classes. Underlying Naden's evocation of Spencerian ethics lies a conviction that:

> We are now in a state of transition from the old theological to the new scientific period; and though much knowledge must be gained and many changes wrought, some with pain and violence, before the process is complete, yet our faces are turned in the right direction, and we know the lines on which advance must be made. (Naden 1890b: 138)

Naden sees science taking precedence from religion and societies, rather than stagnating in old systems of belief, being free to evolve within a Spencerian system of ethics:

> That minds capable of adapting ideals to the world, and the world to ideals, should receive the new light, and so be enabled to work together with nature for the evolution of beneficent and enduring results–this is the brightest hope, the noblest promise, of the coming day. (Naden 1890b: 141)

Naden is advocating that, by the leadership of the few who can achieve these lofty objectives, the rest of society will over time evolve and be elevated: 'Thus, by action and reaction, continuous progress may be ensured, and "the completely adapted man in the completely evolved society" may pass from the region of dreams to that of concrete reality' (Naden 1890b: 142). Naden sees ultimately 'a final unification of egoism and altruism, under the control of reason and science' (Naden 1890b: 142). There is no design, no guiding hand but simply, like the factories of the country, a manufacturing process born out of the natural material world.

Herbert Spencer wrote to Lewins expressing his admiration for *Induction and Deduction*, and he provides a further comparison with George Eliot:

> Already I had formed a high estimate of her intellect and character, and now perusal of some parts of the volume you have sent me has greatly raised this estimate. Very generally, receptivity and originality are not associated; but in her mind they appear to have been equally great. I can think of no woman save "George Eliot," in whom there has been this union of high philosophical capacity with extensive acquisition. Unquestionably her subtle intelligence would have done much in furtherance of rational thought; and her death has entailed a serious loss. (Hughes 1890: 89)

Naden would have been encouraged by these compliments from the person that she admired even more than Darwin, but the final part of Spencer's letter would have rightly roused her to indignation in its shameful and calculated misogynistic response to educated women everywhere: 'While I say this, however, I cannot let pass the occasion for remarking that in her case, as in other cases, the mental powers so highly developed in a woman are in some measure abnormal, and involve a physiological cost which the feminine organisation will not bear without injury more or less profound' (Hughes 1890: 89-90).

The essays that McCrie and Lewins chose to ensure the preservation of Naden's philosophical reputation are generally lucid expositions of an ultimately doomed philosophy. Their attempts to preserve her memory are laudable and reflect their own personal and deep-held convictions, as well as Naden's, at the time of her death. Had she lived she might well have moved on and distanced herself from their views and there is some evidence that she was beginning to do this, as I shall provide in my conclusion. Next, I will consider the obituaries that were published, to see if they provide clues as to the fashioning of Naden after her death.

Obituaries

The Mason College obituary (1890) is an affectionate and reverential tribute to Naden who was largely considered as the most highly rated student of her generation:

> To the career of no student have professors and fellow-students alike looked forward with more confident hope than to that of Miss Naden. It is not too much to say that hers was the most powerful intellect, her gifts the most remarkable, and the most highly cultivated of any who have received their education in science within these walls. (Anon 1890: 50)

There is a claim that Naden learned more German in twelve months than most people could achieve in twelve years and no-one in the Latin class could keep up with her level of progress. The obituary is another piece of a jigsaw that does not seem to be myth-making because it is supported by solid examples of her achievements. The enthusiastic conclusion, in quoting a George Eliot poem, reminds the reader of the Warwickshire writer with whom Naden was often, ill-advisedly, favourably compared:

> We can testify that she is privileged:
>
> to join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence: live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end with self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge man's search
> To vaster issues. (Anon 1890: 55)[74]

The obituary that was printed in *The Woman's World* (1890), edited by Oscar Wilde, is an unremarkable piece that nonetheless contains the remark that her 'career closed abruptly in the midst of development and performance' (Wilde 1890: 221). It also gives a small insight into an aspect of her later life that has not been commented upon before, and that is her engagement (although seemingly not unequivocal) with Socialism: 'In 1889, she read before the Norwood Ladies' Literary Society a paper entitled "Is the Ideal of Socialism Practicable?" which, with all her leaning towards Socialism, and desire for its advancement, she had to answer in the negative' (Wilde 1890: 221). This paper on Socialism now appears to be lost, as is another highlighted in the obituary that was to be

[74] George Eliot. 1867. 'O May I join the Choir Invisible'.

presented to the Aristotelean Society: 'and her name is down on its list of speakers for this session, in the symposium on "Is there Evidence of Design in Nature?"' (Wilde 1890: 222).[75]

The Reverend Richard Dale knew Naden from childhood and his obituary in *The Contemporary Review* (1891), therefore, provides some valuable insights into the private Naden. When Dale published the obituary, Percy Bunting was editor and the magazine had refocused from religious matters to areas such as social reform and international politics. *The Contemporary Review* (1866-1988) was founded 'to provide the Established Church with a liberal forum for similarly serious, signed essays on theology and philosophy' (Brake and Demoor 2009: 139). Originally it was a response to the secular *Fortnightly Review* but by the 1870s this was proving to be a challenge and its editor James Thomas Knowles was dismissed in 1877 for not keeping the publication religious enough; Knowles went on to found and edit the more liberal *Nineteenth Century.* The evolution of the journal explains, to some degree, why Naden attracted sufficient attention to warrant an obituary in its pages, as well as reflecting on the influence of Dale himself. Dale seems very well qualified to write about Naden, given his friendship with Naden's grandfather, who in his retirement often attended the Old Library, Birmingham. Dale recalls that grandfather Woodhill was 'an "elder" of the Baptist Church in Graham Street, of which Mr. Vince and afterwards Mr. Platten, were ministers;' (Dale 1891: 227) but he didn't take part in amusements and 'his ways were of the old Nonconformist type' (1891: 227). Dale did not know Naden's grandmother but was aware of the deep affection that both grandparents held for their granddaughter and Dale seems to have become aware of her at around the age of six as a playmate for his children. He knew her particularly well from the age of

[75] Two sets of notes from Naden's papers were subsequently published by the Aristotelian Society in 1890, 'On Rationalist and Empiricist Ethics' and 'On Mental Physiology and Its Place in Philosophy'. Her notes argue for the inter-dependence between the mind and body to such an extent that they become inseparable. This removes the dualism between mind and body and consequently rejects any religious assertion of the separation in the human of the physical and the spiritual.

around ten to eighteen. Interestingly, he describes her as coming from a puritan house; quite what Dale means is not clear although an 1881 dictionary defines the word as applying to 'one who affects rigid purity in religious matters; [or] a name given in contempt to a dissenter in the reign of Elizabeth and in those of her two successors:' (Stormonth 1881: 490). Dale's description could be implying either of the dictionary definitions of 'puritan', given Naden's non-conformist upbringing and might explain the hint of anti-Catholicism in several of Naden's early poems. This background narrative departs from that of George McCrie, however, when Dale recounts Naden's meeting with Lewins in 1876: 'and he at once acquired a remarkable ascendancy over her mind' (1891: 233). Dale recalls that Lewins spotted Naden's nascent genius and invested a huge amount of time in her. Lewins was a generous, kind and loyal friend to his acolyte, and Dale recounts that 'She felt and welcomed his power over her' (1891: 233).

McCrie disagreed with Dale in an article that was declined by *The Contemporary Review*.[76] McCrie objects to Dale crediting Naden's studying to Lewins's influence and argues that Lewins exerted no control over her studies or influenced her joining the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society to study Spencer.[77] McCrie also observes, to support his contention, that during these years Lewins spent much time abroad. When Dale consoled Naden on the death of her grandmother in June 1887 he felt that, in her grief, she was now taking an ill-advised intellectual path and that she 'had reached disastrous conclusions. The heavens and the earth, truth, beauty, the awful contrasts between right and wrong, the glory of the Supreme–she had come to think that all are the creations of the grey thought-cells of the cerebral hemisphere' (Dale 1891: 235).

[76] Declined by *The Contemporary Review* and later printed in *Further Reliques* (1891).
[77] McCrie contradicts himself in an obituary about Lewins in *The Open Court* in August 1895 where he suggests that Lewins did indeed direct Naden's studies and organised her foreign travel.

Like many of the writers in this chapter, Dale did not understand Hylo-Idealism, as he readily admits, and he questions whether she would have long sustained such a creed. Dale appears to know Naden well as a person because there is some, albeit scant, evidence that she was beginning to distance herself from Hylo-Idealism towards the end of her life.[78] It is unsurprising, therefore, that he chose to reflect on what Naden might have achieved, not from a philosophical but from a literary perspective. His final comments are those of someone who knew Naden well, understood her promise but ultimately saw that promise unfulfilled. He believed that she would be remembered for her poetry. In this Dale was correct and his over-estimation of her poetic worth can perhaps be forgiven:

> Had she lived twenty years longer, I believe that she would have taken a great and enduring place in English literature. Even among the few verses which she wrote, there are some, I think, which for several generations at least, will retain their freshness and charm. (1891: 236)

Whilst Dale focused on Naden as a poet, McCrie wanted the world to remember Naden as a philosopher. He starts his response to Dale obsequiously: 'the article is both brilliant–as everything coming from Dr. Dale's pen is–and interesting, as supplying us with many exquisite cameo-like sketches of her whom we have lost' (McCrie 1891: 237). McCrie's statement gives credence to Dale's account of Naden but his taking Dale to task for three inaccuracies are illuminating. The first two are contested matters of fact between her friends and colleagues and are simply the rejection of the idea that Lewins directed her programme of studies and her admiration of Spencer. Although one suspects the hand of Lewins in directing such statements they are, nonetheless, important indicators of the nature of their relationship. Here is an example, I believe, of a concerted effort from McCrie to rewrite some independence back into Naden's formative years although one suspects that behind the scenes is Lewins.

[78] I cover the reasons for my assertion on p.219.

It is the third objection that McCrie raises that is the most interesting: '*before* her meeting with Dr. Lewins at Southport in 1876, she had worked herself free from the creed of Christendom–so far as she ever had accepted it' (McCrie 1891: 237). If this is the case, then Naden was probably already agnostic in 1876; the combination of her entry into academia and her meeting with Lewins cemented this and began to give focus to her philosophy, which we can now read in context in the 'Philosophy' Notebook. McCrie's main issue with Dale is that he ignores the flowering of Naden's development, which was at its height between 1876 and 1887: 'Eleven years of the most fruitful part of her life, Dr. Dale virtually confesses to be a blank to him (1891: 239). Dale's musings about whether Naden would have been happy with her new philosophy also draws McCrie's ire. Admitting that we can never actually know how she would have turned out he is, however, confident that: 'she would never have graced the ranks of English Nonconformity,' (1891: 240). In other words, this was not a passing phase and, given her absolute determination always to seek the truth, she could never have returned to Christian dogma or indeed to writing any more poetry.

Ultimately, it is Dale's lack of understanding of Hylo-Idealism that exasperates McCrie. His accusation is that Dale's philosophical interpretation of Hylo-Idealism is more akin to neo-Kantian dualism and this is incorrect. McCrie's attempt to help Dale to understand Hylo-Idealism descends into Lewins-like prolixity: 'Hylo-Ideal Monism does *not* pass from cerebral conception to an objective world, as Dr. Dale would have it, but subjectives [sic] the objective by immersion in the subject-self' (1891: 242). McCrie is asserting that even what appears to us as an objective fact or truth is actually an illusion and that all we have is our subjective self – this is the essence of Hylo-Idealism. McCrie ends his essay with an emotional tribute to a friend whom he knew as an emerging philanthropist, a diligent scientist, a talented poet and a potentially brilliant philosopher:

'Let me simply re-echo that most pathetic wail in all literature:– "Oh! The pity of it: the pity of it!"' (1891: 245).[79]

McCrie provides another tribute to Naden in 'Miss Naden's "World-Scheme." A Retrospect' (The Monist Vol VI 1892: No. 258, 3335-7; No. 259, 3344-8 and No. 261, 3360-3). Once again, he devotes most of the essay to providing both a defence and an explanation of her philosophy rather than an in-depth analysis of Naden's personality. When he writes, 'Public attention, scantily bestowed upon her when living, became keenly quickened after her untimely decease' (McCrie 1892: 3335), he is being disingenuous because most of the attention after her death was generated by himself and Lewins. In fairness to McCrie, he does posit that the best way to get to know Naden is through her writing. His claim that she had practically abandoned poetry after leaving Mason College, however, is also suspect. It is hardly surprising that she did not write much poetry during this period given what was happening in Naden's life (see pp.201-202) and so it seems likely that she would have returned to poetry at some point in the near future.

The last serious article about Naden in the nineteenth century was published in 1894, by Richard Garnett (1835-1906),[80] in *Temple Bar* which was a magazine that ran from 1860-1906. This ambitious magazine was subtitled *A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers* and it was aimed at the same middle-class demographic as the *Cornhill Magazine*. It was very successful initially, with a circulation of 30,000 between 1860-1863, declining quite rapidly to 13,000 by the end of the 1860s. By the time of the article on Naden, circulation was down to around 8,000. (Brake and Demoor 2009: 618-9). Its stance was non-political and it published biographies, philosophy, travel writing and literature.

This article is notable in the context of Naden's afterlife for the evidence it provides that, five years after her death, Naden was still attracting enough posthumous attention to

[79] This quote is from *Othello*, Act 4, Scene 1.
[80] Not to be confused with Richard Garnet (1789-1850), British Museum Librarian and father to the above.

warrant publication in *Temple Bar*, that Richard Altick described (alongside *St. James's* and *Belgravia*) as 'one of the leading monthlies of the class' (1957: 359). Garnett was a writer and keeper of printed books at the British Museum and it is possible that he became aware of Naden after she published *A Modern Apostle etc.* or after her move to London in 1888. Garnett's personal interest in Naden and his motivation for writing about a deceased and minor poet, along with the timing of the article, is intriguing. It may have been awakened by his interest in Mathilde Blind, for whom he would contribute the *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for 1901. The prolixity of Garnett's prose makes the article a challenging read; its importance lies in Garnett's interest in the old dichotomy of poets between, what he called prophets of nature, attempting to make the cosmos intelligible, and the prophets of religion, attempting to retain its mysteries. Garnett recognises that in this post-Darwinian world, however, religious-minded poets no longer pronounce on divine revelation but rather interpret what they see in nature:

> we may be so far able to realise how the spiritual school of poetry, with its lineage of priests, has its true complement in a prophetical school, deriving its authority from no transmitted consecration, but content to reveal and interpret the natural in its deeper, and hitherto neglected, aspects. (Garnett 1894: 188)

This subtle and seductive shift in religious sensibility means that science, in its pursuit of the truth, continues to find it a challenge to attempt the same level of interpretive voice as poetry.

Naden is a poet who, Garnett believes, offers an interpretive voice for science that appears to be lacking generally. He describes 'The Pantheist's Song of Immortality' in the highest possible terms 'for exquisitely modulated rhythm, and wealth of fitful haunting cadences, it is not excelled by any poem of similar length in modern literature' (Garnett 1894: 191). Naden goes even further, in Garnett's view, and in her attempts to fuse the natural world and religion through humour and philosophy, she 'antedated, conceptually, an unification more profound than any so-called "reconciliation" of the spiritual and the

material' (Garnett 1894: 199). In the end, there is no dichotomy in Naden's poetry and, as if Garnett had not been profuse enough in his praise of Naden, he concludes with a final tribute:

> Something akin to second-sight is the prerogative of the singer of whom we have spoken. She speaks the language, not of the present, but of the coming day–the day of her realised ideal, the noontide of her prophetic fulfilment. In the alembic of her vision, soul is the dower of every senseless thing. (Garnett 1894: 200)

Garnett's motives for his praise for Naden are no longer clear to us; despite the undoubted brilliance of 'The Pantheist's Song of Immortality' his admiration appears to go too far. By the time of his article, Naden's poetic reputation would have been almost invisible to most of the readership and so it is only possible now to speculate on his purpose.

Garnett's tribute in 1894 was also the year that Lewins had managed the publication of the *Complete Poetical Works*. It is possible that Garnett and Lewins were well acquainted enough for Garnett to agree to use his influence to have the tribute published to stimulate interest in the *Complete Poetical Works*. This was to be Lewins's final tribute to Naden and it stands alongside *Induction and Deduction* as a significant tribute to Naden's poetic and philosophical talents.

Fashioning an Afterlife

The first page of the 'Foreword', written by Lewins, in the *Complete Poetical Works*, reassures potential readers of the inherent simplicity of Hylo-Idealism. It appears that he now recognises the difficulties in finding an audience for the philosophy, including amongst the friends and associates, who might want to own this beautifully produced volume. He tries to give a simple exposition but descends into verbosity:

> It resolves all objects into the subject self, and thus deals the *coup de grâce* to all Dualism whatsoever. So that *Anima*, an ambiguous misnomer, signifying both Life and Mind, or soul, is shown to be the product, not the germ or source, of the Hyle or Matter–the Brain, by its function, being the sole cause of consciousness, without which all is blank nullity and nihility. (Lewins 1894a: vii)

This is, nonetheless, illuminating because having taken this first page of the 'Foreword' to underline the principles that underpin Naden's philosophy and consequently her poetry, he then does something curious. He appends to the 'Foreword' an article that he had previously published in the *Monist Vol. IV* (1894), entitled 'The Unity and Identity of Thought and Thing'. Ostensibly, his intention is to enhance the reader's enjoyment of Naden's poetry through an understanding of her philosophy. Lewins reverts to type as an atheist, however, and attacks state religion before concluding with a paean to some of history's great philosophers. Lewins trenchantly opines that religion has 'run its baneful course, and [is about] to be superseded by reason' (1894a: viii). Unequivocally, he goes on to assert that, 'Where reason, based on positive science, comes into play, or, in other words, when man ceases to be an infant, religion or Theism disappears as a childish illusion utterly incompatible with right reason and rational ethics' (1894a: xi). Christianity is accused of being immoral and claims, such as the Virgin Birth, should be seen by any logical person as a fiction. Lewins is beyond doubt an atheist but what he is attacking is theism. Communities that strictly adhere to devout religious practices are, in his opinion, ultimately emasculated.

Lewins's views are important because, whilst at the beginning of the 'Foreword', he re-states the Hylo-Idealistic principles that underpin Naden's poetry and philosophy, he only very briefly references Naden in the anti-religious article from the *Monist*. I have already illustrated that, from around 1878 and the unpublished jottings in the 'Philosophy notebook', Naden was certainly anti-religious in terms of organised state religion and theology. She was, nonetheless, looking for a way to incorporate religious belief into a more inclusive and tolerant philosophy than Lewins expounds here. I believe that there was a minor schism between Naden and Lewins when it came to religion – not on the principles of religious belief and theology, which they both agreed were anachronistic and damaging to the evolution of society. But whereas Lewins wants religion cut out of society like the

removal of a tumour, I argue that Naden came to see the impracticalities of such an approach. To achieve an inclusive society, she recognises that it is necessary to incorporate religion. In her changing perspectives, she inclined towards Spencer. Lewins's 'Foreword' in this sense is an ill-judged and antagonistic piece of writing that I do not believe Naden would have sanctioned as the 'Foreword' to her poetry had she been alive.

In the *Selections,* there is a dedication to Lewins that acknowledges his friendship and mentoring of Naden and identifies him as the first person to recognise her genius. In the *Memoir*, Lewins expresses the opinion that she was 'abreast, and indeed ahead, to some extent, of the epoch, and all successful reviews must be rather behind it to cater for the vast majority of readers who are in a like predicament' (Hughes 1890: 48). Claims for her being ahead of most contemporary thinking, however, ultimately did not prove to be correct, given Hylo-Idealism's rapid demise. Lewins editorship of the final section of the *Complete Poetical Works* titled, 'Some Personal and Press Opinions' is also questionable. Ostensibly, this section acknowledges influential people who commented upon the *Selections*[81] but most people are simply writing thank-you letters for receiving a presentation copy. In addition, two articles are appended: 'Miss Constance C.W. Naden As An Original Thinker' written by Brewer (part of Lewins's circle) and 'Miss Naden As A Poet' by Nellie C. Hayman, who was Brewer's daughter. Lewins then includes 'Opinions Of The Press' after the publication of the *Selections,* which raises questions about why something similar was not included for *Induction and Deduction.* It suggests that this dry volume did not meet with much success and this would explain why the *Selections* was subsequently published. On the face of it, there was no need for the *Selections,* as all the philosophical work had already been published, as had the poetry which was going to be

[81] Lewins mentions General Sir Henry Ponsonby (on behalf of Queen Victoria), Count Seckendorff, Joseph Chamberlain, Herbert Spencer, Samuel Smiles; those who commented on the *Memoir,* included Lord Reay, Gladstone, Sydney Lee, Sir Philip Magnus.

republished in the *Complete Poetical Works* just a year later. Of the twenty-five press reviews for the *Selections,* most are general expressions of approbation and for those that delve a little deeper, the number mentioning her poetry and those mentioning her philosophy are about equal.

Although the overwhelming majority of comments about Naden were affectionate or positive, there were some adverse comments that suggest that this determination to keep alive her memory does not go unchallenged. Indeed, McCrie himself admits that, 'A Constance Naden cult has been spoken of by some–the suggestion being that a great deal has been made out of somewhat scanty material' (McCrie 1893: xvii). An anonymous article in *Sylvia's Journal* (January 1894) went further in commenting on the *Selections* (1893):

> One would like to speak only in the kindest way of this selection from the work of an interesting young writer, who died a year or two ago; but, notwithstanding Mr. Gladstone's praise of her, the fact cannot be disguised that a very great deal has been made out of a very little. (Naden 1894: 16)[82]

To his credit, Lewins includes the rather scathing review (although typically for Lewins he provides a reply) and he includes the amusing acknowledgement of another less than favourable notice in which he is singled out for criticism:

> I do not mention one or two scurrilous articles in the *National Observer*, a journal conducted on Jingo and 'Patriotic' (see Dr. Johnson's definition of the term) lines, as the scurrility is directed, not against Miss Naden, whom it designates as Titania, as against her Executor, vilified as 'Bottom.' (Naden 1894: 16)[83]

The *Sylvia's Journal* review does, however, have the feel of an honest assessment of what it sees as poor judgement in terms of the choice of the philosophical articles which it feels are somewhat banal. McCrie, receives some deserved criticism:

> But for pretentious and utter gratuitousness commend me to the introduction, which is, we are informed, by Mr. George M. McCrie, who is apparently more anxious to

[82] This page number in the *Complete Poetical Works* can be found at the end of the volume in a section titled 'Some Personal and Press Opinions of the Works of Constance Naden'.
[83] In fact, the offending article was in *The Scots Observer* and not as Lewins describes. The criticism directed at Lewins was that it was his influence that dominated over the essays. See also footnote 79.

> 'introduce' Mr. George M. McCrie than Miss Naden. The book is a lamentable example of the old adage, 'Preserve us from our friends.' (1894: 17)[84]

This rather prescient statement could equally apply to many of Lewins's attempts at preserving Naden's memory whilst attempting to maintain his own too. His reply, 'Constance Naden And Materialism', begins slightly disingenuously in his invoking the great names as approving her poetry when, as I have said, they were merely writing to acknowledge their presentation copies. The rest of his reply is a pompous retort to the accusations of banality and he decides that the best way to explain Naden's philosophy is by directing the critic to her essay 'What is Religion' and, almost inevitably, to his own 'Humanism v Theism' (1887)[85] and to McCrie's 'Sadducee v Pharisee'.

The title for this chapter comes from the fact that both Naden and McCrie used the term 'solar myth', but in ways which differed significantly – Naden referring to herself whilst still alive and McCrie during her afterlife. Naden uses the term facetiously and yet, with hindsight, presciently, to describe the positive reaction to an address that she had given in October 1889. McCrie uses it to disparage narrow-minded specialists who are unable to appreciate the overarching simplicity of Hylo-Idealism and for whom anything they do not understand assumes the qualities of a myth. Such scientists, he argues, are not blessed with her far-sighted thinking and are pigeon-holed into their individual specialisms.

Solar mythology would have been well known to Naden, possibly through the writings of Max Müller. His attempts to trace all mythology back to worship of the sun usually had references to it included somewhere in his books, as in the five chapters on the subject in *The Lectures on the Science of Language, Second Series* (1864). By the time that

[84] See also footnote 79.
[85] This pamphlet contains Naden's essay 'Hylo-Idealism: The Creed of the Coming Day' and letters to her from Lewins from 1878-1880. As we only have Lewins's replies to Naden and not her original letters I have not provided an analysis of their contents in this thesis. Naden explains that ideas expressed by Lewins in the letters are clarified in her essay hence the reason for its inclusion at the beginning of the pamphlet; because of Naden's clarification, I analyse the essay on pp.165-7.

Naden used the solar myth reference she was already aware that she was seriously ill. Her letter to Lewins dated 22 November 1889, appended to the beginning of *Further Reliques*, is an affectionate one to someone she holds dear. It conveys an overwhelming sense of the strain that her illness has placed upon her and her friend. Naden's optimism, however, is either a brave attempt to assuage Lewins's fears, or evidence of her belief that she would recover. She writes: 'now I feel that we ought both to be glad that there is a chance of my getting rid of this incubus, which has been weighing on my life so much lately' (*Further Reliques*: Facsimile of Letter). Naden is undergoing treatment by this time and the letter is dated three days after she had given a lecture to the Women's Liberal Association at Deptford on the extension of women's suffrage. Furthermore, thirteen days after this letter was written she was operated on by Robert Lawson-Tait at her home in London and so, clearly, her optimism was misplaced. She died on 23rd December 1889.[86]

This chapter has considered all the known recollections, tributes and published works that constitute the afterlife of Constance Naden. I have examined the immediate years after her death and found that the personal recollections of Naden, both from close friends and academics, tended to foreground her personal qualities alongside her academic and literary ones. She was compared in talent to George Eliot, an enormous compliment, if a little flattering given the paucity of Naden's output compared to the great novelist who lived to be sixty-one.

Despite the recognition of her many talents, Naden was astute enough herself to recognise the beginning of the 'solar myth' in the final months of her life. After her death, letters of condolence came from many sources, including the suffrage movement, and there was one request, that we know of, for access to her unpublished writings. Her posthumously published essays 'Induction and Deduction' and 'Evolutionary Ethics' are

[86] The death certificate records the cause of death as 'Dermoid cysts of Ovaries since birth. Operation exhaustion eighteen days. Gangrenous at time of operation'.

impressive achievements, although their attempts to portray Hylo-Idealism as relatively simple gets somewhat lost in the opaqueness of the theoretical writing. They survive as essays worthy of exploration, however, for the evolutionary narratives within them. By the end of her life Naden was well-known and respected enough to present papers to the Aristotelian Society. They remembered her respectfully, and her other obituaries were reverential, including those in *The Woman's World*, the *Contemporary Review* and *Temple Bar*. The many and fulsome praises for her academic achievements and literary talents tend to mask the fact that most recollections of Naden struggled to articulate the merits of her philosophy. The negative review from *Sylvia's Journal* that, to his credit, Lewins published, is one of the most illuminating because it questions Naden's reputation, given the paucity of her published works and singles out McCrie for appearing to be more concerned about himself than for Naden.

Lewins needs to face a similar charge to that raised against McCrie by *Sylvia's Journal*. Although Lewins exerted a considerable influence over Naden during her lifetime, I believe that she was outgrowing him by the time that she died. This would explain Lewins's determination to control Naden's afterlife in a way that he was increasingly unable to do towards the latter part of Naden's life. Their relationship began as a master and pupil association and progressed to mentor and gifted acolyte. As Naden began to assert herself, she might well have been looking to progress from the simplicity of Hylo-Idealism and to establish her own philosophical position. The evidence for my assertion is that of the six publications that constitute Naden's afterlife, Lewins is involved to some degree in all of them. In the *Memoir* (1890) he interposes an appendix on Hylo-Idealism into what is largely a personal tribute to Naden from her academic friends and acquaintances. Lewins edits *Induction and Deduction* (1890) as well as annotating Naden's essays throughout, in the style of seer or sage. In *Further Reliques*, (1891) edited by McCrie, the volume is not only dedicated to Lewins but, of the seven appendices, Lewins

contributes four of them. Brewer's *Hylo-Idealism* pamphlet is annotated throughout by Lewins. Through the writings of Madame Blavatsky, Lewins was clearly well acquainted with H.L. Courtney, the author of *The New Gospel of Hylo-Idealism or Positive Agnosticism* (1888). The *Selections* from Edith and Emily Hughes is also dedicated to Lewins and finally the *Complete Poetical Works* is edited by Lewins. Clearly, the affectionate final letter to him from Naden in November 1889, the dedications to him in the books and his own significant contributions to Naden's corpus all paint a picture of a friend, mentor and advisor who up to the end of Naden's life was very close to her. The extent of his influence after her death is, on one level, a measure of his affection and esteem for a young acolyte in whom he saw the enormous potential recognised by all those knew her. It is the very extent of that influence, though, that suggests that he was largely responsible (with some help from McCrie) for fashioning Naden's posthumous reputation.

Lewins claimed that he was Naden's literary executor and this would explain, to some extent, his influence. Yet Naden's Will (proved on 15 March 1890) neither bequeaths Lewins any money nor mentions him as literary executor.[87] Given that Naden leaves Madeline Daniell, whom she had only known for two years, one thousand pounds, Lewins's omission is surprising but not conclusive. It is one of some small but intriguing pieces of evidence that suggest that Naden might well have been moving away from Lewins's influence and Hylo-Idealism as a philosophy towards the end of her life. Firstly, Lewins's claim of literary executorship cannot be substantiated by the evidence that we have. Secondly there is the confusion about who created and named Hylo-Idealism – if we accept Lewins's version that Naden created the concept but he created the neologism then

[87] Naden's Will was proved on 15 March 1890 with a gross value for her personal estate of £32,503.9s 1d. The Will was re-sworn in October 1890 with a gross value of £32,583.6s 3d and re-sworn, in April 1891, with a final gross value of £34,379.11s 3d. Naden bequeathed money to friends, her half brothers and sisters and ordered the established of an investment trust to provide an income for her father, Thomas. There is no mention of money to be left to Lewins or that he should be appointed literary executor. If it was considered necessary to appoint a literary executor this would normally be done through one of the heirs to Naden's estate. It is possible that Lewins was appointed thus although there is no evidence that this happened.

this is contradicted by Naden's later statement that Hylo-Idealism was Lewin's system. Outside of the small circle of Lewins, McCrie, Brewer and Courtney, Hylo-Idealism did not gain any traction and, in fact, was little understood by most people, including to an extent, two of its supposed champions, Brewer and Courtney. Today it is Naden the polymath and poet who is written about and the fact is that Hylo-Idealism died as a philosophy following Lewins's own death in 1895.

It does appear that a small dedicated group of well-connected and well-meaning friends, therefore, did attempt to fashion Naden's reputation for philosophy through publications such as *Induction and Deduction*, *Further Reliques* and the *Selections*; but most recollections and obituaries, including the final one from Garnett in 1894, mention her personal qualities and her poetry as preeminent.

Fig. 8

The neo-classical bust that today stands in the Cadbury Research Library (Fig. 8) and was commissioned by Lewins is also intriguing. The bust is supported by three books;[88] her two volumes of poetry face us and a third book faces away as if to conceal its subject matter … the title on the hidden volume is 'Induction and Deduction: Hylo-Idealism'. Lewins played such an instrumental role in this commission that this must have been his idea but, given the fashioning of Naden, why would Lewins not have insisted that the title also be shown rather than have the spine turned away? James Moore suggests that it was Lewins's Pygmalion-

[88] The plinth on which the bust stands contains the following Latin inscription: 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum Et Mentem Mortalia Tangunt'. This is from line 462 of Virgil's *The Aeneid* and although we cannot know which translation Lewins preferred it would have been approximately 'There are tears for (or of) things and mortal things touch the mind.' More recent translations, such as Cecil Day Lewis's 1952 translation in *Virgil,*

like attempt to ensure that through the hidden volume her philosophy would rise again. I believe that it could have been a far worldlier recognition from Lewins that there was still much work to be done to ensure that Hylo-Idealism would live on after Naden's death. Moore also posits that it could have been Lewins's implying that, because Naden's writing on philosophy was largely pseudonymous, she did not wish to be known publicly as a philosopher at the time of her death:

> Without that theme, without her creed, however, the goddess remains marble-cold: the matter does not live, the mother is unknown, the daughter abides without her sisters. Lewins would have it thus. Only those can recreate Constance Naden who know the secret of herself. Only those can know the secret who clasp her figure and search diligently for the clue. "Hylo-idealism," darkly inscribed on the spine behind her, is still the touchstone. (Moore 1987: 256).

This evocative piece of writing by Moore does, I think, portray brilliantly what Lewins might have been feeling when the bust was commissioned. My assertion, though, is that because Lewins was wrong about the importance of Hylo-Idealism, it is the poetry volumes that are facing us that are the touchstone for admirers of Naden. Within them resides the goddess, no longer marble-cold, but a poet whose talents did ensure her recognition, not through a fashioned afterlife, not through philosophy, but through the legacy of her poetry, which, because of its evolutionary narratives and questioning of religion amid scientific discovery, still speaks to us today.

The Aeneid (Oxford World Classics) tend to stress the emotional rather than the cerebral translating it as 'Tears in the nature of things, hearts touched by human transience'.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that Naden's writing is so steeped in evolutionary narratives that they were part of her ordinary discourse. It is through her poetry that she has, largely through the work of the academic community in the last forty years, gained a reputation that she did not attain during her short life. My thesis has contributed to this reputation by delineating how Naden responded to the cultural context of the 1870s/1880s in a variety of media including poetry, essays, letters, addresses to debating societies and through her paintings (see Appendix Five).

I have attempted to analyse comprehensively Naden's entire, if slight, body of work, to present as complete a view of her writing as possible. By exploring her evolutionary narratives, I have shown that Naden absorbed the ideas of Darwin and then Spencer and that this infuses her writing. This is a unique insight into how a writer of the 1870s/1880s was shaped by cultural encounter. Naden read and understood Darwin and Spencer and had not just absorbed their science and philosophy through the cultural media of her time. This means that she not only endorses much of Darwinian and Spencerian thought but also, where appropriate, she challenges and even mocks them and these encounters appear throughout her work as evolutionary narratives.

The logic for titling my thesis 'Evolutionary Narratives', rather than 'Darwinian Narratives' or 'Spencerian Narratives', is an acknowledgement of the difficulties that exist in defining what writers of the time understood or intended when they talked about, for example, Darwinism. As Fichman argues: 'Evolutionary biology conjured up variant, often conflicting readings within the British scientific community. Historians of science have now successfully challenged the view that Darwinism was the sole, or even dominant, evolutionary hypothesis in the Victorian era' (Fichman 2002: 38). Fichman sees this as a paradox within late Victorian society in that evolution was embedded within the cultural

discourse of the era and yet as he further observes: 'the concepts, vocabulary, visual images, and metaphors of evolutionary biology were bandied about with great frequency, but their precise meaning was often obscure or subject to conflicting messages (Fichman 2002: 64). This paradox had its roots in the pre-*Origin* era and in the decade just after its publication but by Naden's time the scientific community were dividing along disciplinary lines such as astronomy, geology and biology and for the public this was now becoming overwhelmingly confusing. It was especially so given that there was never one single received or accepted opinion in scientific fields themselves, particularly in the case of evolutionary biology. Scientific naturalists were not resigned to accepting this position and, despite the enormous challenges posed by continuous scientific discoveries, they continued to challenge and push the boundaries of scientific thought.

It was into this climate that Naden began her own scientific training and when we read the evolutionary narratives permeating her work what is most noticeable is the part that she played in what Fichman (citing Frank Turner) has observed as, 'a largely secular climate of opinion in which the theories and metaphors of modern science penetrated the institutions of education, industry, and government' (Fichman 1997: 101). The use of the term 'evolutionary narratives' has enabled me to read Naden in the way that I believe is most fruitful: that is, as someone who recognised the importance of the theories of Darwin whilst maintaining a sceptical enquiry into natural and sexual selection; but also as someone who increasingly admired and embraced Spencer's philosophy. Naden was both a post-Darwinian and a Spencerian but more accurately for her time she might be described simply as an evolutionist.

I have also explored the extent to which Naden's embracing of evolutionary theory resulted in her moving from religion to agnosticism. Whether she became an atheist remains an open question, because she is elusively enigmatic throughout her upbringing, education and her writing. We can glimpse an individual at times religious, agnostic and at

times possibly considering atheism. Naden was trying to steer a path between religion, science and philosophy whilst formulating a grand vision that would unite them all. Her philosophy seems to be attempting some form of accommodation with religion and there is a sense throughout her work that religion has never truly left her. This can be evidenced from this well-known portrait photograph (Fig. 9) from 1887. The photograph was taken in the year of her grandmother's death and it shows her in what are likely to be mourning clothes, including fashionable jet bracelets that were popular at a time of bereavement. It is a conventional portrait photograph but what is striking is that, in what was to be the final period of her life, Naden is wearing a cross. Whether this was done out of respect for her beloved grandmother or a desire not to offend Victorian sensibilities about death we can never know. It is another part of the Naden myth, however, that both intrigues and mystifies us because it seems to contradict the picture I have assembled of Naden as a potential agnostic. This fluidity is part of the spirit of her age, as a representative of which she has proved to be so worthy of close study.

Fig. 9

My analysis throughout Chapters One to Three shows how Naden's poetry and prose developed during the 1870s/1880s. This is an important contribution to our understanding of how her evolutionary narratives reflected the religious and intellectual journey of a writer of the time. In Chapter One I argue that Naden's exploratory beginnings are exemplified through her poems about paganism, polytheism, druidism, mysticism, pantheism and monotheistic Christianity. In these early engagements Naden is exploring

and challenging religious belief, albeit through the brevity of individual poems that do not form parts of a coherent whole at this stage of her writing. This early poetry and its nascent delineations lead ultimately to her unified view, the syncretic overarching philosophy of Hylo-Idealism. Naden is unsure at this stage how to deal with all the various elements of religion, past and present. Furthermore, when she moves onto science she seems to embrace Darwin but is equivocal about sexual selection. This does not prevent her from exploring the subject throughout the six poems I analysed from *Songs and Sonnets*. Sexual selection clearly fascinates her and throughout these poems she explores the range of emotions it engenders. These range from loneliness and isolation through, for example, poorly considered career choices; or what sexual choice means either for a woman faced with a life-changing choice; or for men evincing the affectations of male behaviours and expectations. Throughout her explorations of the subject Naden's humour is often evident, challenging equivocation, affectation and the inherent unpredictability of Darwin's biological theory. So far, Naden's poems portray human emotions in religious or scientific encounters but her sonnet cycle is almost entirely devoid of the human element and instead focuses on nature. Here Naden shifts between positive and negative moods that seem to be directed by the rhythm of the seasons. The sonnets are earth-born and as such are Darwinian in their affirmation of nature in all its harsh indifference and splendid beauty; but they are Spencerian in their representation of elevated consciousness, through sensory experience. There are strong indications throughout these sonnets that Naden is leaving religion behind. The poems are not an expression of the supremacy of God controlling the elements but of nature, as an evolutionary force, operating by its own natural laws and power. Naden believes that within nature can be found answers to all scientific enquiry and that the more we can understand it, interrogate it and commune with it, the more inevitable will be our progress as individuals and as society. The sonnets take my analysis up to 1886 when it is possible to detect a change in her poetry which I explored in the next chapter.

Science and philosophy emerge confidently in Naden's later poetry and I analysed this development throughout Chapter Two. There is a contemporary reference to this development from an anonymous writer who remarks that, 'The influence of her scientific work is clearly shown by a comparison of Miss Naden's later poems with the "Songs and Sonnets"' (Anon 1890: 51). Naden's early engagement in religion is now maturing into an interest in how religion has itself evolved throughout its history into the nineteenth century. She is aware of science's subordinate role in earlier societies compared to religion, but she is part of a generation that sees science, for the first time, challenging religion's overarching influence in society. Naden sees that this is not a quick process and that there will be no clear-cut winners or losers but more likely a process of attrition, struggle and compromise. In this evolution of both religion and science Naden recognises the need to accommodate both sets of narratives and it is this search for a synthesis that infuses her later poetry. Ultimately, Naden desires a philosophy that will encompass religion and science and that can be expressed in language that will be meaningful to all.

In 'A Modern Apostle', rather than exploring individual facets of science and religion, Naden brings them all together in one technically accomplished long poem through the story of Alan, the pantheistic socialist, and Ella, the materialist idealist. Their struggles and the potential violence that societal changes can unleash, when orthodoxy is challenged in the face of the ignorance of the masses, are all explored here. Through it all stands Ella, a beacon for the possibilities of the new world order of science and philosophy. In this later poetry Naden continues to show her fascination with sexual selection and clearly enjoys experimenting with its possibilities. 'The Story of Clarice' explores the often-irrational convolutions of the supposed rituals of human sexual selection and the Darwinian assertions of female inferiority, through the highly intelligent character of Clarice, who has been thought to be a model of Naden herself. Amongst her later poetry Naden's increasing development and confidence has been most often explored through her

'Evolutional Erotics' poems. This series of four poems provides humorous examples of Naden attacking Darwinian notions of female inferiority, the supposed inevitability of female choice based on intelligence alone, patriarchal rejection of female academic achievement, and the ignorance of many of the patriarchy when it came to evolution and philosophy. Throughout the poems Naden's intention is to challenge, to lampoon and ultimately to unsettle whatever notions her audience hold concerning sexual selection. Furthermore, Naden disconcerts her readers through appearing to be both serious and yet capable of humour, whilst studying, writing and engaging with the Victorian patriarchy without ever sitting comfortably within it. In this endeavour, she exemplifies a period when sexual selection was by no means accepted by either the scientific community or the wider populace. Naden is a post-Darwinian but not an unequivocal one and she successfully deploys her comic register both to engage with Darwin but also to provide a distance from him where she is unsure. Naden's increasing confidence with a complex subject, such as sexual selection, is further exemplified throughout the eleven sonnets I analyse from *A Modern Apostle etc*. These sonnets are self-assured pronouncements on science and philosophy which are subjects that by this stage of her life she believes nourish and feed the human psyche. This group of poems demonstrate how religion has all but faded away from Naden's poetry to be replaced by a worship of the mind and, in this aspect, she is progressing from Darwin to Spencer. Naden recognises the challenges of communicating thought-provoking and often perplexing ideas to a wider audience, however, and this was where Darwin succeeded admirably. In all these challenges, it is our imagination that holds the key to understanding and experiencing nature to feel its power, to engage with the difficult concepts such as sexual selection and ultimately to resolve our own inner dilemmas. The deftness of touch and accessibility of Naden's poetry whilst engaging with multifaceted subjects gave her a potentially wide appeal but I have been

unable to find, in her publishers' (Kegan, Paul) archives, sufficiently clear evidence about the scale of her poetry's sales and this is an area for further research.

In Chapter Three I provided the first close reading of all Naden's extant essays, letters and miscellany to unearth the evolutionary narratives which they contained. Her writing begins to articulate ideas that she had been formulating since her first meeting with Lewins in 1876 and further developed in her 1878 'Philosophy' Notebook. These are based upon scientific fact and increasingly agnostic views of God from which she begins to develop a system of ethics to live by in this post-Darwinian age of Spencer. This evolution from Darwinian scientific empiricism to Spencerian social philosophy shows Naden searching for a system to unify science, religion and philosophy and that means, at this stage of her life, Hylo-Idealism. She has clearly departed from orthodox religion and is advocating a new philosophy-based orthodoxy driven by her post-Darwinian, Spencerian beliefs. She appears to be agnostic rather than advocating aggressive atheism of the type typified by Lewins; throughout this chapter Spencer is the dominant and most influential person in her thinking. Paradoxically, unlike Lewins, Naden appears to be uninterested in attracting undue publicity to herself and employs several pseudonyms as a distancing technique. Her preferred pseudonym from the time of her first published work was simply C.N. Her first four essays in the *Journal of Science* are all written by C.N. but then, as a sign of increasing confidence, she becomes Constance Arden (CN) and simply Constance Arden before publishing 'Paracelsus' (1883) as Constance C.W. Naden. She submits further letters to the *Journal of Science* and in these she playfully uses C.A. and C.N. (Constance Arden) to confuse and, perhaps, to obfuscate the male readership. This increasingly relaxed position is disposed of when the publication or the subject matter is potentially controversial, or if she is seeking publication in new media. For example, she reverts to C.N. when publishing in *The Agnostic Annual* and *Knowledge*. She never uses C.N. for any of her publications at Mason College, however, although some anonymous

articles are almost certainly her work, preferring instead to use C.C.W.N or Constance C.W. Naden. Clearly, *Mason College Magazine* was a vehicle that she was comfortable with and she had no issues with being recognised by the readership – even her pseudonym C.C.W.N. was easily attributable to her by everyone at the college and she was called it in her obituary in the magazine in 1890. Despite her distancing techniques, which are understandable given the secular nature of her philosophy, there is evidence, throughout her work, that her desire was to find some accommodation for religion. Throughout her poetry Naden exemplifies that religion's influence had been so pervasive that it would have to be dealt with in some way and could not be simply denied by advocating Lewins's brand of atheism. Society and its individuals would need to evolve and Hylo-Idealism would accommodate this reality and encompass it. Religion had after all provided a degree of comfort for people throughout history but now, like science and philosophy, it must itself evolve too. Whilst an increasingly progressive Naden sought such an accommodation she nonetheless denies the reality of a first cause and she is critical of state religion.

Naden is a complex fusion of pantheist, agnostic, humanist, materialist, idealist and at times Romantic and the undoubted fluidity of her thinking is surely at this stage attributable to her relatively young age and developing mind. Naden may have been young but she was ambitious and visionary. She was a fledgling scientist and an emerging philosopher and, despite her age, was one of the few people who could grasp the enormity of the implications of Darwin and the immensity of Spencer's vision. Naden's final writing was completed when she was just thirty-one; by contrast, Darwin was fifty when he wrote the *Origin* and sixty-two when he wrote the *Descent*, while Spencer was forty-two when he wrote *First Principles*, the first volume of the *Synthetic Philosophy*. Naden desired a synthesis of Darwin, Spencer and religion through her own system, Hylo-Idealism, but even this philosophy she was evolving at the time of her death. To understand Darwin required a confidence in relatively new sciences such as biology and geology and to

understand Spencer one needed to have a comprehension of philosophy. Darwin saw evolution in terms of the natural world, whereas Spencer wanted to show that natural selection, for example, was merely part of a much greater evolutionary mechanism that existed throughout the cosmos and could be applied everywhere including to societies. If viewed in this way, then Darwin provided the key to understanding Spencer and a failure to grasp Darwin's theory would make an understanding of Spencer impossible. For Naden, the nexus of the earth-born natural biology of Darwin and Spencer's vision of how evolution can be applied to the formation of the cosmos, the developments of her own times and the possibilities for the future of mankind, provided a glimpse of the syncretic vision that she sought. If such a breadth of vision is missing in her early poetry, then perhaps at that stage she was still simply following a standard path of absorbing the immensity of Spencer only after having formulated her own view of Darwin. This can be supported by the following statement from Raphael Meldola lecturing in 1910 but recalling his student days of the 1860s/1870s:

> My own case is, I imagine, typical of the general attitude of the younger school of naturalists of that period. We had read the *Origin of Species* and had mastered–or thought we had mastered–the views of its author. With no very strong prepossession in favour of the orthodox view of species formation by special creation, we required but little persuasion to convert us into Evolutionists. If any feeling of astonishment arose it was that such simple and effective causes and such conclusive reasoning as was contained in Darwin's work should have given rise to any controversy at all. Herbert Spencer was to most of us a name of which we had heard vaguely, but which had, as we thought–I refer to the late sixties and early seventies–no special connexion with natural science. (Meldola 1916: 12)

Naden was, herself, evolving from a post-Darwinian to a fully committed Spencerian when her life ended. She was not a Lamarckian in the way that Spencer was, however, and so had she lived she might not have been overly surprised to see the behemoth of Spencerian thought crumble with the general dismissal of Lamarck. Naden would have done with Spencer what she did with Darwin, absorbed the parts that she accepted and moved on. There is some evidence that she was already doing this with Hylo-Idealism, as she sought

gently to put some clear water between herself and her devoted mentor Lewins.[89] Spencer wanted to establish philosophy as a science and I posit that this was a direction in which Naden was beginning to travel. She was an adherent to facts and always returning to first principles in the way that Darwin did, but this was not something that Spencer, in his grand abstractions, had either the time, space or inclination to provide. History has been harsh on Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*. Whilst he may appear to us today as having been held in a somewhat over-estimated esteem by his contemporaries, we must always remember that he bestrode Naden's era like no other philosopher of the time. During her time, what would have been to Naden an obvious correlation of two great thinkers would have been immensely exciting to her. She was a Darwinian in science and a Spencerian in philosophy and the fact that they coalesce in Naden makes her such an intriguing figure from this time. Naden's love of detail and facts is what makes her a post-Darwinian but the fact that she was a philosopher is, ultimately, what makes her a post-Darwinian Spencerian; much though she admired Darwin, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, she needed more than even Darwin could provide. She desired the grand sweeping abstractions of Spencer. Darwin offered a communing with nature through an organic evolution that was at its heart a cruel, wasteful and brutal environment. Naden wanted to commune with nature through the whole cosmic sweep of evolution, from her materialistic view of matter through to her belief in the ultimate progress of man. Darwin provided the fine detail, the facts, but for Naden it was Spencer who provided the vision, who could unlock the door to the mystery of mysteries that Darwin referred to in the first paragraph of the *Origin*. Darwin furnished the notions of the development of the organism but it was Spencer who broadened it out to show how external conditions worked on the organism and the

[89] Naden's 'Prefatory Note' in *Induction and Deduction* (1890) credits Hylo-Idealism as Lewins's system. This is not supported by the primary source evidence from people such as George McCrie and Herbert Courtney that I have referenced in Chapter Four.

modifying effects of such conditions. Communing at an organic level is Darwinian but wanting to go further, deeper, higher is Spencerian. Naden could not be one without the other and Chapter Three has illustrated that.

Having analysed Naden's literary output throughout the first three chapters, I considered the extent of the fashioning of a Naden myth in Chapter Four. The paucity of previous academic analyses means that an historicist approach was apposite to scrutinise the contemporary reactions to her death in the five crucial years after her demise. All Naden's friends and academic associates show a desire to remember her with affection and admiration for her love, intelligence, quick-wittedness and humour. The emotional responses to the early death of a much loved and esteemed friend generated heartfelt tributes that were numerous and varied. The paradox that emerges is that whilst most people wanted also to remember Naden as a poet, a small group of intellectuals, led by Lewins, was determined to ensure that she would be remembered for philosophy. Lewins and McCrie saw the potential for a posthumous reputation for their gifted friend, based on philosophy, that would also do their own reputations no harm at all. In this they were bolstered by a supporting cast of Ebenezer Cobham Brewer and Herbert Courtney. But it is conclusively Naden's poetry that is remembered today, whilst her philosophy is almost totally forgotten. Inevitably, this leads me to conclude that the attempt to establish Naden within the evolutionary narratives of the time by her determined philosophical champions was not successful.

The fact that Naden is now viewed so favourably as an important part of this period is almost entirely down to her poetry. Since the latter part of the twentieth century she has been consistently reread and analysed by the academic community, albeit through a narrow selection of her work. This focus has often been on her more humorous poetry and this has skewed our impression of her as a serious poet. Of the ninety-eight published poems, only twelve can be said to be humorous and so we should remember Naden as a serious poet

capable of witty verse and not vice versa. Lewins's attempts may have ultimately been unsuccessful but it is imperative to recognise that he was a huge influence on Naden. Any criticism of him needs to be balanced by the fact that he was a good friend, mentor and possible father-figure to Naden throughout her formative years and that she welcomed his attentions. Also, Lewins's actions are explicable to a degree because by the 1890s the secular nature of Hylo-Idealism was no longer as shocking as it was in the 1870s/1880s. This means that his attempt to exaggerate her importance in her own era warrants some acknowledgement and understanding. Furthermore, science was confident and forging a path that, whilst never eclipsing religion, meant agnostic beliefs did not generate the same hostility in the decade after the *Origin*. Naden wrote during a period of discovery but also during a time when the supposed religious certainties of the past were fading away. The two decades of her adult life, therefore, represent a time in which scientists, philosophers, theologians all sought to reconcile themselves and their own personal beliefs into a way of viewing life that challenged ways of thinking about the past. This process was continuous and, in a sense, we connect with the Victorians because today we recognise, understand and continue with their struggle. Naden was never entirely comfortable with the anti-religious facets of her work, and sought debate and reconciliation rather than direct confrontation, and in this she would have been well-equipped for the debates of the *fin-de-siècle*. The following anonymous contribution to the *Mason College Magazine* about Naden's vision for a future religion is particularly apposite at this point:

> Writing on the subject of orthodox belief–which she definitely abandoned–she says: "The religion of the future will be a more vivid feeling of life–not of one's own life, but of life in general–a sort of extended sympathy. So that we shall shrink from doing anything that is against the general laws of happiness, even when it seems to make for our own happiness. At least, that is the ideal which seems to me the true one. (Anon 1890: 53)

I argue, therefore, that Lewins and McCrie did indeed attempt to exaggerate Naden's importance in the narratives of the 1870s/1880s and, apart from their bouquets to her, there

is ample evidence through the philosophical works published after her death, the Naden bust and the Constance Naden medal, that this went beyond merely keeping alive the reputation of a gifted young woman. My detailed analysis of Naden's writing means that I have been able to critique the version of Naden that has been passed down to us by Lewins and McCrie while acknowledging that their ultimately unsuccessful attempt was nonetheless aimed at securing the philosophical reputation of a person they clearly esteemed. But there was also Naden's reputation as a poet, as a scientist and as a human being. Her largely restrained and circumspect approach when compared to Lewins's aggressive atheism suggests that there would have been differences ahead between them. I posit that the opposite of what Lewins intended happened and that Naden was successfully established, not into the history of philosophy, but of poetry. In fairness to Lewins, such was the brilliance of Naden that had she lived to maturity she might well have gone on to achieve great things within philosophy given her very promising beginnings. Lewins certainly believed this, but his mistake was to insist upon aligning Naden to a philosophy that had had its day and, despite her promise, her early death was to ensure that there was to be no philosophical afterlife for her. With the restoration in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century of minor female poets by the academic community, Naden's afterlife was, I believe, guaranteed, not just as a gifted poet, but as an important exemplar of the post-Darwinian generation.

My thesis has shown how the various strands of Naden's education, thinking and writing acted as a confluence for her engagement in religious and scientific discourse and that these were expressed through her poetry and prose. As Naden herself writes:

> Poetry may be personal; philosophy (world wisdom) must be universal. He who, in these days, forgets or wilfully ignores this distinction has failed to master the characteristic lesson of his epoch. His very earnestness will exercise a reactionary influence upon contemporary speculation and progress, by fettering living emotion to dying or dead thought. (Arden 1882b: 314)

Naden's embracing of Darwin led her, ultimately, to a rejection of God as a supernatural and controlling presence. Instead she looked for a new faith and she had begun to discover this through the works of Spencer. That faith would embrace love and Naden expresses it in Spencerian terms: 'Love in the inner-world of the soul, plays the same part which is played by the attractions of cohesion and gravitation in the great outer world, directing towards one object opposite feelings and desires' (C.C.W.N 1884: 3). Naden's engagement with religion, science, poetry and philosophy was not only impressive in its breadth but is also an indication of the further intellectual achievements that might have been possible had she lived beyond the *fin-de-siècle* and into the twentieth century. The three most influential people in her life, Darwin, Spencer and Lewins, all lived to maturity and were still forming their own views at the end of their own long lives; but Naden was not fully formed intellectually. There were four strands to her evolving character: the philosopher busily creating a new system under the aegis of her mentor Lewins; the literary author of two highly rated volumes of poetry; the Liberal[90] philanthropist who was now wealthy and of independent means and seemed determined to forge a life for herself in a number of projects dedicated to young women or the poor; and finally, of course, there was the private Naden who appears to have been greatly admired but also loved by her ever-widening circle of friends. Naden is an example of academic and intellectual aspiration in late Victorian womanhood. Such women wanted to be autonomous but were often at risk of being effectively owned by men. What shapes Naden's work is her sense of loneliness and doubt about her chosen path, her mocking of male pretensions, her single-minded determination to achieve high standards in her chosen subjects and perhaps even her apparent lack of romance. Naden achieved much in her short life; she rose above

[90] Naden was a Liberal in politics (Hughes 1890: 51); she canvassed for Mr. G. Leveson-Gower in his unsuccessful bid to become MP for Marylebone. This was at a By-election held in 1889 and shows that Naden was politically active in the last year of her life right up until her operation and death in December.

traditional patriarchal expectations and she garnered a reputation, however fashioned by her friends, that lives on today through her poetry.

This thesis has provided the first substantial analysis of Naden's literary work to include all her letters, essays and miscellany. My scrutiny of evolutionary narratives in Naden's poetry and prose combined with an understanding of her afterlife makes a unique contribution to the field. In addition, I here publish two previously unseen paintings (Appendix Five) and I have quoted from some unpublished letters and poetry. During my research, I have discovered Naden's grave and the house where she grew up; in 2009 I was keynote speaker at the unveiling of a blue plaque on the house (Appendix Four); I have become a family friend of some of her descendants and I have been given access to an archive of previously unpublished material. My essay on Naden's life was published in *The Literary Encyclopedia*. Naden was a Victorian polymath and, in many ways, a unique individual who engaged widely in cultural discourse and so to study her comprehensively has required an inter-disciplinary approach that encompassed religion, science, poetry and philosophy. Any of these areas could be explored more deeply to provide further insights into Naden, especially in the light of the discovery in 2015 of her unpublished poetry notebooks. These notebooks should also lead a future researcher to publish an edited complete poetical works of Naden that will update the 1894 *Complete Poetical Works*.

I conclude my thesis with the last known and previously unpublished photograph of Constance Naden (Fig. 10[91]). It was probably taken in the last year of her short life. To accompany the photograph, the following comments from the Reverend Richard Dale who knew Naden, as both a family friend and admirer of her many talents, are especially pertinent. His comments capture the essence of Naden as a person, scientist, philosopher and polymath:

Fig. 10

> With the buoyant hope that she was on her way to final certainties concerning the mystery of the life of man, his origin, the stages of his development, his present relations to the universe, she passed with a light, firm, but rapid step... (Dale 1891: 226)

Those who knew Constance Naden had no doubts that she would have gone on to achieve distinction in her chosen field. Whether this would have been in literature, philosophy, science, politics or philanthropy we can only speculate. Yet the story of her life, recollections of friends and academics, her philosophical writing and volumes of poetry remind us that she was one of the most gifted women of her generation.

-END-

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[92] For an explanation of the various pseudonyms used by Naden, please refer to pp.231-2.

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Appendices

Appendix One: *The Oscar Wilde Letter*. Circa 1888.

Oscar Wilde was editor of *The Woman's World* in November 1887. Before he was eventually dismissed by the publishers, Cassell and Co., he had, according to Stephanie Green: 'molded [sic] it into an exchange of ideas about femininity, dress, aesthetics, literature and society' (1997: 102). Wilde's laudable attempts at changing a fashion magazine into an intellectual vehicle for women, whilst also challenging what Brake and Demoor have called, 'both gendered reading and gendered textual space,' (2009: 245) was driven by an evolutionary spirit. Green also observed: 'If physiology was evolving, as Darwinism proposed, then so was everything else. The right conditions only had to be applied. The woman's magazine (and popular culture in general) was a way to inscribe those new conditions' (1997: 105). In the highly competitive world of publishing Wilde's attempts were not, ultimately, a success, as Brake and Demoor explain: 'his forward-thinking venture was somewhat ahead of its time and never made to pay' (2009: 245). His attraction to the work of Naden can be glimpsed by the following passage that Wilde himself wrote when reviewing Naden's collection *A Modern Apostle etc.*: 'Miss Naden's work is distinguished by rich imagery, fine colour, and sweet music, and these are things for which we should be grateful wherever we find them' (1888: 81). Wilde's admiration for Naden led him to subtitle *The Canterville Ghost* as *A Hylo-Idealistic Romance*. Wilde's other reasons for this surprising addition are unclear but, in the *Literary Encyclopedia*, I suggest that, '*The Canterville Ghost* sets up many humorous contrasts between late nineteenth century British and American societies, but it is Wilde's gentle mocking of American materialism and British cultural pretensions that led him to employ the philosophical sub-title' (Ridley 2010). Clearly, Wilde's esteem for Naden was the prime motivating factor in his decision to ask her to contribute to the magazine. Below is the

transcript of an undated and unpublished letter that Wilde wrote to Naden from 16, Tite Street, where he lived from 1884 until 1895 (Fig 11[93]):

> Mr Oscar Wilde presents his compliments to Miss Constance Naden, and would be very much gratified if Miss Naden would allow him to add her name to the list of contributors to one of Cassell's monthly magazines he has been asked to edit.
> Mr Wilde is anxious to make the magazine the recognised organ through which women of culture and position will express their views and to which they will contribute. Miss Thackeray,[94] Miss Mulock,[95] Mrs Fawcett,[96] Lady Wentworth,[97] Lady Archibald Campbell,[98] Lady Dorothy Nevill,[99] the Princess Christian,[100] and many others have promised to write, and an article or short poem from Miss Constance Naden would give a charm and interest to the magazine.
> Mr Wilde would suggest as a subject for an article 'Modern Life in its Relation to Poetry'–Is there subject matter for poetry in the nineteenth-century in fact? But any subject Miss Naden chooses is sure to be made attractive. (Wilde circa 1888: undated.)

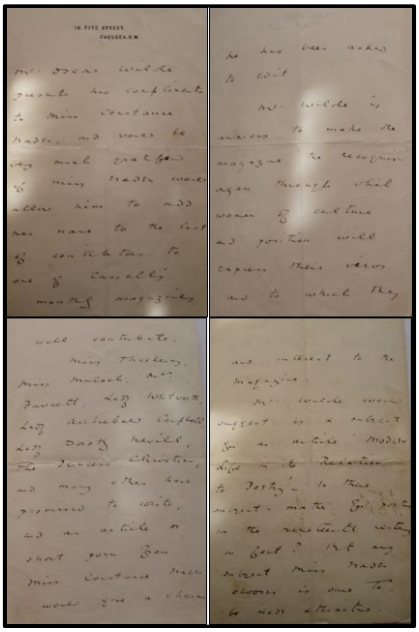


Fig. 11

The letter had the desired effect and Constance Naden had her sonnet 'Rest' published in *The Woman's World* in March, 1888.

[93] © Sarah Rees-Porter 2017. Private collection, not to be reproduced.
[94] Anne Isabella or Lady Ritchie (1837–1919) was the daughter of William Makepeace Thackaray.
[95] Dinah Maria Mulock (1826–1887) was a poet and novelist.
[96] Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847–1929) writer, political leader and feminist.
[97] Anne Isabella Noel Blunt (1837–1917) or Baroness Wentworth; married to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.
[98] Janey Sevilla Campbell (1846–1923), theatre producer.
[99] Lady Dorothy Nevill (1826-1913), writer and horticulturist.
[100] Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (1846–1923), Queen Victoria's daughter.

Appendix Two: *Knowledge*: Letters – Naden and Lewins. 1885.

Naden's essay 'The Evolution of the Sense of Beauty' was published in *Knowledge* in six parts between 10 April and 22 May. In addition, between February and June 1885, Naden had nine letters published in *Knowledge*. They were all relatively brief and I have listed them below and noted where they provide some form of evolutionary narrative. Most of them, however, are a determined exposition or defence of her philosophical beliefs. The letters portray Naden as a philosopher rather than an evolutionary scientist and they endorse her determination to study the mind rather than practical Darwinian science. In addition, her friend and mentor Robert Lewins had six letters published in *Knowledge* between January and July 1885. Again, these are mainly philosophic discussions that are interesting for the glimpses that they provide of evolutionary science and, as such, I have also given very brief indications of any evolutionary narratives for the benefit of future researchers. Naden's essay (that I analysed in Chapter Three) and these sixteen letters that both Naden and Lewins had published in 1885 represent a concerted effort on their part to convince the editor of a relatively new journal (*Knowledge* began in 1882) that their philosophy was part of the zeitgeist and warranted significant exposure. Their minor success was not enough for Lewins, however, and in Appendix Three I have shown that he participated in a further sustained campaign of letter-writing and submissions of material to the editor of *Knowledge* during 1885.

Part A – Naden: Letters to *Knowledge* - 1885

'The Sentient World'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 171, 6 February, 115.
Notable for the assertion: 'Hylo-Idealism differs from previous systems in being a unification of Materialism and Idealism. I may give as its two complementary mottoes "Cerebrum cogit, ergo est," and "Tot cerebra, quot mundi' (C.N. 1885b: 115). Broadly translates as *I think therefore I am my brain* and *As many brains as there are worlds*. Naden is seeking to replace religious with scientific authority in a post-Darwinian sense.

'Hylo-Idealism'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 176, 13 March, 223.
Notable for the attempted removal of the supernatural outside of the natural world through her assertion: 'There is obviously no excuse for the further assumption of "an essence superior to, and dominating matter"; therefore, having no evidence in favour of Dualism, we obey the law of parsimony, and rest in Monism' (C.N. 1885c: 223)

'Does a Universe Exist Exterior to Ourselves?' *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 178, 27 March, 268.
A short philosophical defence of Hylo-Idealism that, again, highlights the primacy of the individual mind in its interaction with the universe.

'Are Tripe and Onions Objective or Subjective?' *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 182, 24 April, 355.
Another short and rather tongue-in-cheek philosophical defence of Hylo-Idealism and notable for her defence of science within her philosophy: 'I do not question the production of sensations, &c., by the interaction of consciousness with something existing independently of consciousness. To do so would involve, among other consequences, rejection of the results of geology and astronomy, which would be even worse than the abolition of "tripe and onions"' (C.N 1885d: 355).

'The Evolution of the Sense of Beauty'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 184, 8 May, 401.[101]
Short letter of correction notable for a comment by 'G.H'. asking for clarification on how Naden can justify a claim that an animal develops colour perception and how such development could have happened. Clearly, a criticism of evolutionary scientific belief.

'Conceptions and Images'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 186, 22 May, 444.
Two sentence retort to philosophical discussion … no evolutionary narratives.

'The Evolution of the Sense of Beauty'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 186, 22 May, 444.[102]
Notable for Naden confessing that there are gaps in evolutionary scientific knowledge: 'At the present stage of our knowledge, it seems impossible to frame even a plausible hypothesis of the evolution of the organs of sense; and (assuming the truth of the Young-Helmholtz theory), I do not pretend to "explain" how the nerve-endings were differentiated for the reception of special kinds of light' (Naden 1885: 444).

'Idealism'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 190, 19 June, 530.
Short philosophical retort to 'JS' … no evolutionary narratives.

'The Weak Point of Darwinism'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 190, 19 June, 531.[103]
Important short letter because it draws attention to St. George Mivart's *On the Genesis of Species* (1871) as clearly articulating the supposed weak point of Darwinism. Naden admits to flaws or rather gaps in knowledge concerning Darwinian mutations or variations and the subsequent way that natural selection works. Mivart drew attention the lack of development stages of organs such as the eye as illustrating the weakness of the theory. These external factors married to a lack of understanding of physiological development and how it works are the weak points of Darwinism. Naden ends with a defence of Darwin, though, calling him a great writer.

[101] Published as Constance C.W. Naden.
[102] Published as Constance C.W. Naden.
[103] Published as Constance C.W. Naden.

Part B – Lewins: Letters to *Knowledge* - 1885

'Obscurum Facere Per Obscurius'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 170, 30 January, 94.
Lewins emphasises the physical and physiological nature of his philosophy. His claim for it be materialistic and humanistic is matched by his oblique denial of God, by asserting that individual consciousness is the creator, rendering the primacy of human nature.

'Hylo-Phenomenology *v.* Ontology'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 173, 20 February, 158.
Lewins calls on scientists to eradicate the first-cause creationist argument with courage or we will be forever infants in our search for knowledge. Darwin is criticised for displaying such a lack of courage: 'It will be remembered that Darwin withheld his "Descent of Man" for thirteen years, out of mistaken deference to the claims and scruples of spiritual ontology' (Lewins 1885a: 158).

'Egoism, Theism, and Cosmism'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 176, 13 March, 223.
Defence of Hylo-Idealism.

'Phreno-Cosmism and Realism'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 178, 27 March, 268.
Defence of the Hylo-Idealistic primacy of the Ego. No evolutionary narratives.

'Idio–Not Hetero–Centricism; The Scientific *Rationale* of the Universe'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 185, 15 May, 421.
Lewins admits that he has not convinced the readership about Hylo-Idealism and then devotes around five hundred words to another attempt. At the end, the editor admits the letter was included to assuage Lewins but insists that this is the last letter he will publish on the subject. An important letter for these reasons but no evolutionary narratives.

'Brian and Thought'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 188, 5 June, 488.
An attack by Lewins on a previous contributor asserting the dualism of brain and soul. This alleged unscientific religious belief provokes Lewins's ire, he states that our brains and nervous systems, 'neither require or admit of any quasi "spiritual" factor, which can only be a nonentity superadded to the somatic organism' (Lewins 1885b: 488).

'A Paradox'. *Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 192, 3 July, 13.
This may not be Lewins as it is signed R.L. and not his usual Robert Lewins M.D. Also, the subject matter about population growth amongst grandfathers and great-grandfathers is not typical. There is an intriguing final statement though: 'it is not unusual for a husband to be old enough to be his wife's grandfather' (Lewins 1885c: 13). In the case of Lewins and Naden this was certainly the case; this could explain why it was signed R.L.

Appendix Three: *Knowledge*: Letters Received and Short Answers – Lewins. 1885

In 'Letters Received and Short Answers', Robert Lewins elicited nineteen responses from the editor to letters he wrote between February and October 1885. Whilst the responses from the editor are published, the original letters from the contributors are not. This leaves a gap in our knowledge of what Lewins was writing so voluminously about to the editor. It is possible, occasionally, to surmise his subject matter from the pithy responses he elicited but, for the most part, the editorial responses are an illuminating record of how challenging it was for Lewins to find an audience for his philosophy. They also offer tantalising glimpses of what an indefatigable character Lewins must have been given his undoubted persistence. *Knowledge* was one of several journals that Lewins and Naden had identified as offering the chance for publication and so perhaps it was unsurprising that its editor was assailed so truculently. Appendix Two has shown that they achieved some minor success in this endeavour but this appendix serves as a record of the relatively low-level of esteem in which their philosophy was held. Below is a summary of the editorial responses to Lewins's now lost letters. They provide an insight for any future researchers of Lewins into his determination to bring his and Naden's philosophy to a wider audience but ultimately of the failure of that venture.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 171, 6 February, 117.**
'Dr. LEWINS points out, in connection with letter 1573, p.94, that, in line 24, "protoplasm" should be "proplasm," that "oetiology" is misprinted for "aetiology," and "intercraneal" for "intercranial." I am not particularly concerned to defend the compositors (who don't always treat me with that loving-kindness which I regard as desirable); but really your terminology is so comparatively novel that they, who are used to set up paragraphs "plainly worded," may well be forgiven for a slip or two'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 175, 6 March, 204.**
'Dr. LEWINS also complains that on line 25 of the second column of his letter (1602), on p.158, the comma should be after "such," and not after "self," as printed'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 176, 13 March, 225.**
'Dr. LEWINS. I am sorry to exclude your really able letter, with much in which I agree and sympathise, but really the subject has outrun all bounds'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 178, 27 March, 269.**
'Dr. LEWINS. I must adhere to my decision. Your reply to "Hallyards" is marked for insertion, though. Do not imagine that I am opposed to "the utmost latitude in speculation" because I do not print all you send me. I exclude it because, if I am to admit a contention in favour of atheism pure and simple, I cannot, in common fairness, exclude dogmatic theology, which are rules expressly exclude. Moreover, the pressure on our space, of matter of much wider and more popular interest, is enormous. I am at least as much alive to the evil wrought by superstition as you can possibly be. Your letter was unfortunately destroyed, with a score of others, when I decided on its rejection'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 181, 17 April, 334-5.**
'Dr. LEWINS. I have read your book and its appendix. Even were I to admit the irrefragability of your dictum that "Materialism" is "obligatory on the contemporary conscience of civilised Europe and America," I must persist in my belief that the columns of KNOWLEDGE are not the place in which this dogma should be expounded. As I have just said to "Hallyards," this is a magazine devoted to the popular exposition of Physical and Natural Science; and not in the very least for discussions into which *Faith* enters as an element. Explanations of Natural facts here are "Plainly worded and exactly described," and every school, or no school, of thought is free to make their own or its own deductions from such facts. If the teleologist finds ample evidence of design in the intricate inter-adaptation of the component parts of the visible universe, he will always find such inter-adaptation insisted on where it exists. If the fact that mankind existed contemporaneously with the mammoth, reindeer, hyaena, and cave bear, at least 100,000 years ago, throws doubt on the Adamic theory of the human race, and conclusively shows that men were born and died unnumbered ages before the events recorded in Genesis, no consideration for anybody's creed or feelings will prevent the plain unvarnished truth from being told. But I must be rigidly impartial, and while I will not have theology attacked from a scientific standpoint, neither shall science be assailed here from a theological one. If once such a discussion were initiated in these columns, it might–in fact would–drift anywhere. Because, as I have said, I must utterly refuse to listen to one side only; and if we are to have Atheism, why not the Athanasian Creed, too?'

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 182, 24 April, 357.**
'Dr. LEWINS. I must ask you kindly to accept my reply on page 334, as my reason for the non-insertion of the fresh summary of arguments for Hylo-Nöesis, with which you have favoured me'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 183, 1 May, 380.**
'Dr. LEWINS. Much that you say is beyond contradiction. To select a single illustration, I feel quite as strongly as you do how utterly baseless a figment is that of a "vital principle," and have said before here that it would be as wise (or as foolish) to call in a "watch principle" to explain the action of a chronometer. Upon such a question as this discussion would clearly be permissible. But an impartial re-perusal of your own letter must show you that you trench upon questions upon which argument could not be admitted here without wholly altering the character of this journal'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 185, 15 May, 422.**
'Dr. LEWINS. You will see how, once for all, your reiterated exposition of your theory has found a place in our correspondence columns'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 187, 29 May, 467.**
'Dr. LEWINS. John Bull is no doubt amenable to but too many of the charges that you formulate against him. Whether though he could or would gain any accession of sweetness and light in the way you suggest may legitimately be a question for difference of opinion'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 189, 12 June, 513.**
'Dr. LEWINS. Intellectually constituted as are the overwhelming proportion of mankind, your theory would fall upon but barren ground indeed, were I to proclaim it as persistently and prominently as you continue to urge me to do. To give a single illustration why: I trust to you not to mention it, but in strict confidence I may tell you that I was at the Derby on Wednesday week, and, *inter alia*, saw a gentleman on the course who had had a fight with another gentleman, with the result that the first gentleman's nose was bleeding copiously. Now, it strikes me that the fist of his antagonist had a very objective existence indeed for him, and that had I (of course, at the risk of having my own head punched) assured him that his unpleasant condition was wholly subjective, and had its beginning and ending in his "Ego," he might have doubted my sanity, had he done nothing worse'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 190, 19 June, 533-4.**
'Dr. LEWINS. Until you can definitely prove, on scientific grounds, that mind and matter are eternal, I must persist in the belief that they must have had an origin, and there can be no more objection to call that origin God than to dub it a Solipsism, or anything else; and this even if heaven and hell be the veriest figments of uncultured mind. Of course, Newton did write hopeless rubbish on theological subjects. It is notorious that he was actually insane at the time (1692-93) when, at Dr. Bentley's request, he wrote his four letters on the existence of the Deity. You are yourself, though, under a delusion about St George Airy. Your anecdote is so amusing that it really deserves reproduction; but it is scarcely suited for those columns'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 192, 3 July, 14.**
'Dr. LEWINS. I am entirely with you as to the utter unsoundness and untenability of much which you assail; but when you proceed categorically to assert, in effect, that matter is eternal, and that what the overwhelming majority of mankind agree in calling mind, soul, or spirit is immanent in it, and neither has, nor can have, any separate existence, I can only regard such assertion, in the existing condition of our knowledge, as (in Scottish legal phraseology) "not proven." All I can say is 'Ἀγνοέω'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 201, 4 September, 212.**
'Dr. LEWINS. We must beg to be excused'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 202, 11 September, 235.**
'R. LEWINS. I must by your own account view Hylo-idealism from the standpoint of self; and if I tremble at it, or am otherwise affected by it, I tremble at self or am otherwise affected by myself. (And yet I am not myself in being so affected.) Well then, I must judge by myself, and judging by myself I reject Hylo-idealism as for me quite meaningless'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VI I, No. 203, 18 September, 256.**
'R. LEWINS. Glad you are pleased'.
'R. LEWINS, M.D. "It will go near to be thought so, shortly"'.

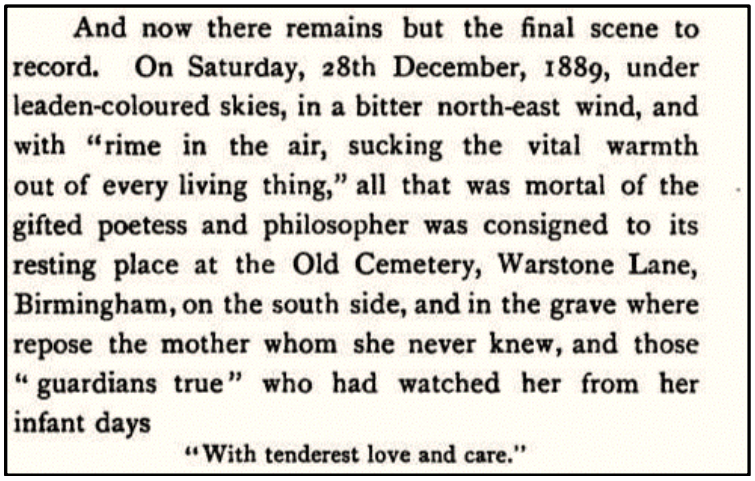
***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 205, 2 October, 300.**
'R. LEWINS. Emphatically no; there will not be full scope (as you expect and hope) for attacks on religion in the monthly series of KNOWLEDGE. You are careful to show what you think you see bad and mad in all religions; *I* hope to show what there is and has been that is good. You see we differ widely'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 207, 16 October, 338.**
'R. LEWINS. *Quien sabe?*'

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 181, 17 April, 335. (not Lewins)**
'F.W.H. Hylo-Idealism has already been sufficiently expounded here. It is not difficult to make a précis even of your own epitome of it. Here it is. The universe is the sum of a man's sensations: destroy the man and you annihilate the universe'.

***Knowledge*, Vol. VII, No. 192, 3 July, 14. (not Lewins)**
'H.R.B. [excerpt] The whole question you raise is a delicate and difficult one. See first reply to Dr. Lewins, for example, at the beginning of p.534, in illustration of what I have to contend with'.

Appendix Four: Finding Constance Naden - Grave and House



And now there remains but the final scene to record. On Saturday, 28th December, 1889, under leaden-coloured skies, in a bitter north-east wind, and with "rime in the air, sucking the vital warmth out of every living thing," all that was mortal of the gifted poetess and philosopher was consigned to its resting place at the Old Cemetery, Warstone Lane, Birmingham, on the south side, and in the grave where repose the mother whom she never knew, and those "guardians true" who had watched her from her infant days

"With tenderest love and care."

Fig. 12

Grave

The passage above (Fig. 12) is from *Constance Naden: A Memoir* (1890) and it is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, for the charm and affection of the prose used to record Naden's interment. Secondly, Naden's resting place is given as the Old Cemetery, Warstone Lane and this is incorrect. This error, made in 1890 by William R. Hughes (the former President of the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society), meant that Naden's grave remained undiscovered until 2009. Unsuccessful attempts were made to locate the grave by the University of Birmingham and myself, based on Hughes's information. Then, a Birmingham City Council Bereavement Officer, Pamela Chilvers, searching on my instructions, found that Naden is buried at Key Hill Cemetery, Icknield Street (a few minutes-walk from Warstone Lane). The choice of the non-conformist Key Hill cemetery was likely made by Josiah Woodhill (Naden's grandfather) who would have purchased the family plot sometime after Key Hill's opening by the Birmingham General Cemetery Co. Ltd in 1836. The Woodhill plot is in Section P, Plot 460 and contains both grandparents, Naden's mother Caroline and Naden herself. Section P, however, has only a tiny fraction of the 840 gravestones remaining that were originally there and the Woodhill family grave had seemingly not survived. This is because when Birmingham City Council

acquired Key Hill under compulsory purchase in 1952 they subjected the graves to a topple test to determine whether they were safe. This led to most gravestones either being laid flat (unless they were ledger stones and already flat), removed or buried in situ. An initial visit to Key Hill confirmed my fears that the condition of Section P would make pinpointing the exact location of the Woodhill plot, P460, almost impossible. There were two surviving gravestones, however, close to where P460 should be found. Henry Pemble lies in P422 and has a very clear memorial and this meant that P460 would be found approximately four feet to the left and eight feet straight ahead (facing away from Icknield Street). Olive Emily Avcrill lies in P458 and this meant that P460 would be found approximately eight feet to the left. This can be best visualised through the graphic below (Fig. 13):

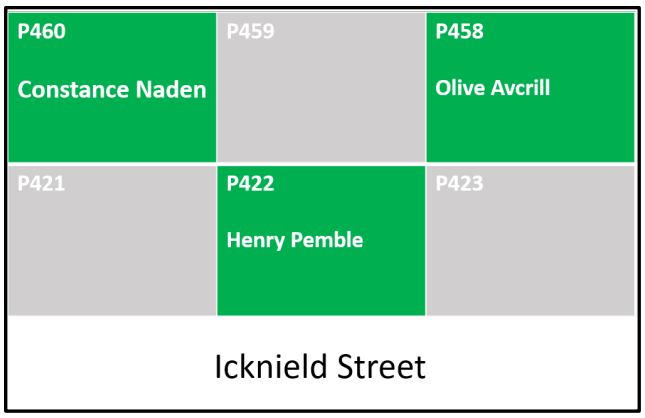


Fig. 13

Having identified the location of the grave, I advised The Friends of Key Hill Cemetery and they then excavated the site and made the exciting discovery that the gravestone had survived (Fig. 14) and was buried just below the surface. Although the stone is in poor condition and in many pieces, it has been reassembled on a bed of sand just to one side of the site. Council records show that the gravestone was removed c.1954 pursuant to section 38 of the Birmingham Corporation Act but as can be seen in the picture below the gravestone was not removed but buried in situ causing irreparable damage:

Fig. 14

Discussions are ongoing between Naden's descendants and interested groups such as the Jewellery Quarter Research Trust about the best course of action for the gravestone. From the fragments so far pieced together it is believed that this is the inscription on the gravestone:

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF
CAROLINE ANNE
THE BELOVED DAUGHTER OF
JOSIAH C & CAROLINE WOODHILL
OF EDGBASTON, AND WIFE OF
THOMAS NADEN
ARCHITECT
WHO DEPARTED .....
FEBy 5th 1858 AGED 27 YEARS
"Scenes by no tear disturbed, no sin defiled,
Scenes nor by heart conceived, nor tongue confessed,
Unveiled to thee, dear spirit of our child; -
And we are comforted, for thou art blessed"
JOSIAH COX WOODHILL
FATHER OF THE ABOVE
BORN JANy 12th 1801
DIED DEC 27th 1881
ALSO OF CAROLINE, RELICT OF
THE ABOVE JC WOODHILL
WHO DIED 21st JUNE 1887
AGED 76 YEARS
ALSO
CONSTANCE CAROLINE WOODHILL NADEN
DAUGHTER OF
THOMAS AND CAROLINE ANNE NADEN
DIED DECEMBER 23rd 1889
AGED 31 YEARS

Fig. 15

House

The *Memoir* tells us that Naden was born at 15, Francis Road (formerly Francis Street) Edgbaston which has not survived. Following her mother's death shortly after the birth, Naden and her father, Thomas, moved into her maternal grandparents' home at Pakenham House, 20, Charlotte Road. Edgbaston. Following my discussions with the Birmingham Civic Society, Stephen Hartland investigated whether Pakenham House had survived. Initial findings were unpromising as 19, Charlotte Road had survived (see A, Fig. 16) but opposite (where we expected to find Pakenham House) was a tower block that has since been demolished and new residential houses built (see B, Fig. 16) suggesting that 20, Charlotte Street had indeed been demolished. *Kelly's Street Directory* of 1853, however, showed the numbering scheme for Charlotte Street to be sequential and this meant that the large house next to No.19 was Pakenham House, 20, Charlotte Street (see C, Fig. 16); the house had, after all, survived and had been converted into flats:

Fig. 16

The house is described by British Listed Buildings as a villa, built between 1850-55 with coach house/stable yard and was Grade II listed on 8 July 1982:

Fig. 17

Following this exciting discovery, the Birmingham Civic Society secured authorisation for a blue plaque to be erected on the side of the house. This was unveiled in 2009 by the then Lord Mayor of Birmingham, the late Michael Wilkes (Fig. 18). I was invited to be the key note speaker at the unveiling that was attended by approximately thirty local people and academics from the University of Birmingham. The following passage is from the Journal of the Birmingham Civic Society, *Birmingham Perspectives: Spring-Summer 2010* (page 12), 'Steve Ridley, who spoke at the unveiling said: "Constance Naden was a first class student, she published poetry, wrote about and developed a philosophical system called Hylo-Idealism, as well as being a talented painter and a skilled debater - but we also know that she was humorous, kind and affectionate. Her friends recalled, "… the most womanly of women, and though science and literature were much to her, love and friendship were infinitely more." She was a true polymath and I am delighted that Birmingham is

honouring her with a Blue Plaque.' Steve is doing a part-time PhD about Constance and her work and it was his research that uncovered the location of Constance's grave.'

This is a picture from the ceremony:

Fig. 18

Unveiling of the Blue Plaque
David Clarke, Chairman, Birmingham Civic Society; the Lady Mayoress and the Lord Mayor of Birmingham Councillor Michael Wilkes, and myself.

Appendix Five: Finding Constance Naden – Watercolours

Constance Naden's father, Thomas, remarried after the death of her mother, Caroline, in 1858 and went on to have five more children. One of these children, Eustace Henry Naden was born in 1868 and was, therefore, a half-brother to Constance. There are no recollections of them meeting (although they were probably acquainted at some point, given that I have evidence that his sister, Gwendoline and Constance were introduced to each other at a dance in Birmingham) and "Harry" as he was known, emigrated to Seattle in the United States in 1890. He returned briefly to England in 1916 which is the year that their father, Thomas, died aged 92. In 1919 Harry had a daughter called Mary Alice and in 2004 I began a ten-year correspondence and friendship with her until her death in 2014. In one of her early letters, Mary Alice advised me that upon his return from England in 1916 her father Harry brought back the following items with him from the Naden household in Selly Oak; a diamond and pearl lavalier, two French vases, a gold French clock, two bronze statues, an oil painting of a horse and two unframed watercolours by Constance Naden. Most of the items listed above were stolen in a burglary but the two Constance watercolours were not taken and in 1956 Mary Alice had them framed. Just a few months before her death in 2014 Mary Alice gave me the two watercolours. This remarkable and deeply moving gesture was, Mary Alice advised me, given as a thank-you for our friendship and for all the information I had provided over the years especially the discovery of the grave and the discovery of the house. The two watercolours are clearly the work of a talented amateur painter and Naden's skills were developed from an early age at the small private day school in Edgbaston that she attended from the age of eight until she was sixteen or seventeen: 'Much time and enthusiasm were given in the school to flower-painting, and Miss Naden's first laurels were won in this art, her patient brush producing the most wonderfully delicate and accurate studies of flowers from life' (Hughes 1890: 9-

10). Her talent was considered worthy enough for her to have the painting, *Bird's Nest and Wild Roses* (Fig. 19) accepted by the Birmingham Society of Artists (BSA) in 1878[104] although the following year she had two more paintings rejected (one of which I believe was *The Passion Flowers*). In an email discussion with the auction house, Christies, one of their specialists described them as, 'extremely beautiful and very competently handled for a woman who was clearly an amateur artist.'

Bird's Nest and Wild Roses[105]

Fig. 19

The choice of dog-roses is interesting because according to the nineteenth century language of flowers, the dog-rose symbolises pleasure and pain, as opposed to most varieties of rose symbolising love. Naden would have been aware of the plethora of flower

[104] The Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham, *The Spring Exhibition of Water Colour Paintings* (1878) confirms that *Bird's Nest and Wild Roses* was exhibit number 845 with a retail asking price of £5.5s.
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language dictionaries that had been published since the very first one, *Le Language des Fleurs* (1818) by Mme. Charlotte de la Tour. Often the dictionaries would have several different meanings for the flowers but some often had the same meaning and the dog-rose seems to be consistent. Whether Naden believed in a hidden meaning of flowers is debatable but I have argued in my thesis that contrasting emotional states are a feature of Naden's poetry as was her love of nature and desire to commune with it. The reputed pleasure and pain of the dog-rose in a natural setting is, therefore, consistent with what we know of Naden's psyche. The eggs are likely to be robin's eggs which were usually laid in clutches of five (a wren's eggs can be a similar colour but the nest is usually very well concealed and covered over). During Naden's time it was an acceptable activity to hunt wild birds as food but the robin was one of a small number that were considered taboo. The religious iconography is to do with various stories explaining the red-breast. For example, the robin was said to have appeared at the crucifixion and its breast was stained with Christ's blood as it sang on the cross. Also, the robin was reputed to have singed its breast, hence the red colour, by visiting tormented souls in hell to give them water. The subject of dog-roses and bird's nests was, however, well-known during the Victorian era especially through professional painters such as John William Hill and William Cruickshank and it may be that Naden was simply honing her skills by using them as an inspiration.

The Passion Flowers[106]

Fig. 20

The passion flower was still a relative novelty in England by the time that Naden came to paint this native of southern Brazil. The language of flowers suggested that the flower represented religious superstition and this provides a plausible reason for Naden to choose it as a subject notwithstanding its beauty. Naden's painting (Fig. 20) has a perceptible source of light on the left-hand side where the flowers are open with a slightly darker tone to the right-hand side. This could symbolise the start of the day when the petals uncover the ovary only to close again after the day returns to darkness. This reputedly symbolises the day that Christ spent on the cross and there have been many other elements to this

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enigmatic plant that have been used to suggest the crucifixion. The five anthers suggest the five wounds Christ suffered on the cross, the three stigmas represent the nails, the tendrils are the whips used for scourging, there are seventy-two radial filaments or corona that can suggest the crown of thorns and the leaves remind some people of the Roman spears. There are more suggestions that parts of the flower allude to the sponge of gall and vinegar or the pillar used for the scourging. Whatever versions the Victorians used this flower is symbolic to many people of the Passion of Christ and as such Naden is painting a representation of Christian faith whilst spending most of her time in her poetry and prose dismantling it. The painting was likely from the mid to late 1870s and although Naden was still very young we know from her unpublished philosophy notebook that she was already questioning religious adherence. These thoughts, combined with her love of nature and the recent introduction into England of an exotic flower with much putative religious iconography, provides us with the likely reasons behind Naden's selection of this subject for her painting.